

# PLUCK AND LUCK

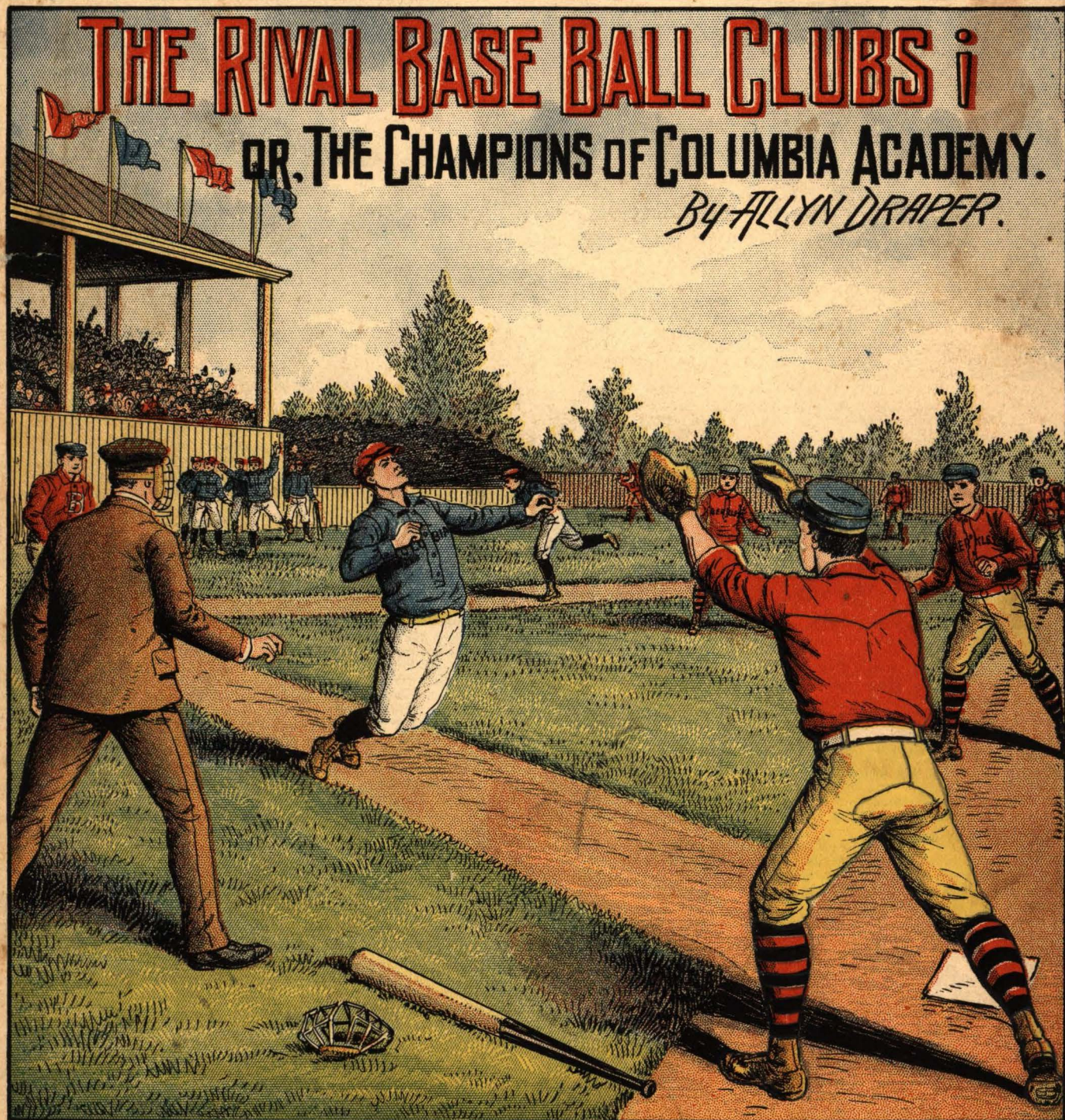
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Bob started to run home, but all at once everything turned black before his eyes, and half way between third base and the home plate he reeled and fell. "Out! Side out!" called the umpire as the ball was fielded back to the catcher.

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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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No. 267.

NEW YORK, JULY 13, 1903.

Price 5 Cents.

# The Rival Baseball Clubs;

OR,

# The Champions of Columbia Academy.

By **ALLYN DRAPER.**

## CHAPTER I.

### BOB STANLEY AND THE RIVAL BASEBALL CAPTAINS.

"Thank you, I don't mind if I do."

"You may be sure you are welcome, or I should not have asked you."

The two lads were standing beside a small boat on the bank of one of our grand rivers.

Tom Beverly, the last speaker, was one of the richest boys of Columbia Academy.

The other boy—Bob Stanley—was one of the poorest of all the students of that famous boys' school.

But Bob was poor only in the strict monetary sense. Save financially, he was the peer of any lad of the academy.

Bob Stanley was rich indeed in the possession of good looks, good health, a bright intellect, and a manly, genial disposition.

Tom Beverly, too, was what the boys of the academy generally termed "a first-rate fellow."

He wasn't very devoted to study, but he was one of the best natured fellows in the world, generous to a fault and true to his friends.

Tom and Bob were very nearly of an age, and good friends.

Though Tom Beverly, in common with all the other students, knew Bob Stanley had to work his own way through the Academy course, he wasn't a bit of a snob, and did not, therefore, look down upon the ambitious poor boy.

The spring term of Columbia Academy had just opened, and the present was Bob Stanley's first term as a student of the institution.

But, though Tom Beverly was a senior, he had taken to the new student from the first.

It chanced the two lads had met and became acquainted on the railway, while both were enroute for the academy.

Perhaps it was because, in many points, he was essentially Bob's opposite, that Tom was so attracted to the former, for Tom was a delicate, slender boy, while Bob, who had always worked hard, was strong, muscular and self-reliant.

If Tom liked Bob the latter was immensely fond of his rich

friend, and just now his friendship and courage were both about to be unexpectedly put to the test.

Tom Beverly had just hired the boat, beside which he and Bob were standing.

He had invited Bob, who had chanced to join him, to take a row on the river.

Then followed the remarks opening the narrative.

The owner of the boat was an old fisherman, whose cabin was out of sight, around a bend of the stream.

Tom was the owner of the finest boat on the river, but as his own craft was undergoing repairs, he had been compelled to hire a boat, for his physician insisted he must row every day in the fine weather.

Tom was unfastening the chain which secured the old fisherman's boat, when two boys came in sight, around the bend of the river.

"Hello!" exclaimed Tom, "there come two of the Berkley Academy boys, and, as sure as I live, one of them is Dan Kennard—the Berkley bully,' as we fellows call him."

"Dan Kennard! Why, he's my cousin!" exclaimed Bob.

"Then I beg your pardon, but really, Bob, he is a big loafer, insolent, overbearing, and brutal. He is the very opposite of a gentleman in everything, and I am quite surprised to learn that he is 'a relative of yours.'"

"Well, I'm not a bit proud of the relationship, I can assure you," replied Bob, with a laugh.

"But the fact is," he added, "Dan Kennard and I, though cousins, are almost strangers to each other. It is supposed his father cruelly wronged mine years ago, and so won wealth by his rascality."

"Perhaps it's not a very Christian spirit I am showing in saying so, but I'm really glad you and Dan Kennard are not good friends, for he is my enemy, and that, too, for no just cause."

"How is that, Tom? Have you and Dan had a quarrel?"

"Well, rather. You see, our club, the 'Columbia Academy Baseball Club,' I mean, won the championship in the academy league last season."

"That's why your nine is now known as the 'champions?'"

"Yes, the champions of Columbia Academy," replied Tom, with pardonable pride.

"That's what caused the trouble between Dan Kennard and I. As he had plenty of money and the ascendancy of an acknowledged bully among his classmates, he managed to get himself elected captain of the Berkley Academy Baseball Club last season."

"So I have heard."

"The Berkley Club was the next best club to the Columbia's nine in the whole academy league, so the great struggle for the pennant championship was between our boys and those of the rival school."

"Berkley Academy and Columbia always have been rivals in everything."

"That's so, and you can imagine how high the feeling run between the rival baseball clubs last season. I was captain of the Columbia's, you know, and more than once Dan Kennard and I had words on the baseball field."

"Dan always was quarrelsome."

"Once he gave me the lie to my face, which insult I resented by knocking him down. Of course I am no match for him physically, and he meant to give me a terrible thrashing on the spot, but the police interfered."

"Dan Kennard will never forgive you that blow."

"No. He is a desperate, dangerous fellow. I remember well how he glared at me that day on the ball ground when the police came between us. He declared then he would yet make me pay dearly for the blow I gave him."

"He will try to make good that threat, I am sure."

"No doubt. I am not a coward, Bob, but I'd rather not meet him. Let's get off in the boat before he and his companion comes up."

"All right," assented Bob. "That's the best plan. I would rather avoid Dan Kennard, too."

The boat had been drawn up pretty high on the sloping bank, and while it resisted the united efforts of the two Columbia boys to push it into the water, Dan Kennard and his companion caught sight of them.

Bob Stanley had certainly stated nothing but the truth when he said that Columbia and Berkley Academies had always been rivals.

The two institutions were located on the banks of the same beautiful river, only about six miles apart.

Not only did the spirit of rivalry exist among the students of the two institutions, but the same feeling secretly obtained among the two faculties, and the presidents of the two institutions were competitors, in the keen business sense, for public patronage.

Every victory of Columbia was a blow Berkley felt and resented, no matter how fairly the victory was won.

Even the winning of the championship by the Columbia nine was a stroke to Berkley bitterly deplored. The boys, on account of the prestige it gave their rivals, the faculty, because Columbia's triumph on "the diamond" was an indirect advertisement of great value for the school.

While nominally the president and professors of the two schools were supposed to discountenance the spirit of enmity, which the rivalry of their pupils engendered, it may be questioned if they were sincere.

As soon as Dan Kennard and his companion caught sight of Tom Beverly and Bob, the bully, who was captain of the Berkley Baseball Club, exclaimed:

"Look there, Jim! There's Tom Beverly, and some other Columbia fellow!"

"That's so!" assented Jim Benedict, who was the fellow student and boon companion of Dan.

An evil, exultant light sprang into the small, beady eyes of the bully, and he added:

"I guess the chance I've been waiting for ever since the last game at the close of the past baseball season has now come."

"Oh, you mean to go for Tom Beverly."

"Yes. If the fellow with him pitches in, you take care of him; I'll thrash Tom Beverly. I seem to feel the blow he gave me that day on the ball grounds yet."

"Well, hurry up—they are trying to get off in the boat."

"They want to run away—they are afraid of us. Tom Beverly knows well enough I can thrash him."

"Yes, but I don't know the fellow with him—never saw him before. He isn't one of last season's Columbia nine. A new student, most likely."

"Probably. But hurry up, I say."

The two lads ran straight for Tom and Bob.

Dan Kennard certainly looked as if he could make short work of Bob's friend in a fistic encounter.

The bully of Berkley Academy was big and brawny for his years.

He had a full, flabby face, and there was nothing intelligent about it. Dan was fashionably dressed, and he sported a superfluous quantity of showy jewelry, which told he had a vulgar taste for display.

His companion, Jim Benedict, patterned after Dan as far as he could in all things. But Jim was by no means as well supplied with funds as his comrade, and he was often glad to be on borrowing terms with Dan.

"I'll pick the quarrel and get Tom Berkley into the fight. You leave all that to me," continued Dan, as he and Jim Benedict almost reached the captain of the rival baseball club and Bob Stanley.

"All right. It's your personal quarrel anyhow, you know, Dan," assented Jim.

Meanwhile the boat still stuck in the sand.

"We shall have to face the music. The way Dan Kennard and his companion are running this way I am sure they mean mischief," said Bob.

"Not a doubt of it," replied Tom.

The two lads exchanged a few further remarks. Bob knew Tom Beverly had been under the care of a physician ever since the spring term opened. The lad had experienced several hemorrhages of the lungs, and the doctor declared he had exerted himself too severely the last season in his efforts to lead the Columbia nine to the championship.

Gentle exercise in the boat would be beneficial, was the physician's verdict. But the man of medicine affirmed if Tom had any hope of acting as captain of the team the present year, or of playing in the game at all, he must take the very best care of himself.

"I don't mean my big bully of a cousin shall compel you to fight him, Tom. Goodness, old fellow, were you to receive a few heavy blows in the breast, you would be almost sure to have another attack of bleeding at the lungs," said Bob, suddenly.

"I fear so. But I can't expect you to fight my battles, Bob, and there are two of them. Both may pitch on you. I shall have to take a hand if there is a fight."

"I hope not."

"Hello, you fellows! what are you doing with that boat?" demanded Dan Kennard just then, as he and Jim Benedict came blustering up to the Columbia boys.

"You ought to be able to see for yourself," said Bob Stanley, and he turned full upon his cousin.

Until that moment Dan had not recognized his "poor relation."

"What! You here, Bob Stanley! and wearing a Columbia uniform? Well, well, I didn't know they had turned Columbia Academy into a poorhouse or a charity school," exclaimed Dan, sneeringly, as he saw the face of his cousin.

"There are other things in the world you don't know, Dan Kennard. I'm not ashamed to say that I am working my way through the academy. But, if justice was done, perhaps I

might have some of the money you are so lavish with," replied Bob.

"Take care. I don't want back talk from you. But I do want you and that white-livered sneak with you to get away from that boat, and be quick about it."

"I have hired the boat!" said Tom Beverly.

"I don't care if you have. Jim and I mean to have a row in it all the same."

"You can't have the boat," replied Tom, firmly.

"Can't, eh? I'll show you. Anyway, I owe you a debt, and I mean to pay it here and now. There are no police officers to take your part as there were on the baseball grounds the day you struck me. Tom Beverly, I'm going to give you the worst thrashing you ever had in your life."

For a moment the boy captains of the rival baseball clubs stood glaring at each other.

Bob Stanley stood close to his friend Tom.

He was watching Dan Kennard closely.

Chivalrously Bob was resolved that the brunt of Dan's vindictive fury should fall upon himself, rather than upon the now weakly lad, who was in no condition to defend himself.

"Look here, Dan," said Bob. "Tom Beverly is under the doctor's care. I tell you he is a sick boy. You shan't fight him."

"Maybe you'll stop me?"

"That's just what I will if you crowd us too far."

"That's enough! Come on, Jim. We can thrash them both!" cried Dan Kennard, who had now worked himself up to a state of great rage.

As he spoke he made a rush at Tom Beverly.

But Jim did not promptly follow. He was comparatively cool, and he saw that, as he afterward said, "the new student looked like he could use his hands."

Bob made a leap and met Dan in his enraged rush.

Then for a few moments there was an exciting fistic encounter. Dan dealt his cousin some telling blows. But Bob was not idle. He returned blow for blow, and all at once Dan went down like a log.

Bob had knocked him off his feet.

The bully was partially stunned. But he scrambled up and began to berate Jim in the most abusive language for not helping him.

The battle might have been renewed, but just then a dozen of the Columbia boys came in sight, on the river bank, and Dan and his companion concluded that "discretion was the better part of valor."

So they ran down stream in the direction of the Berkley institution.

Some of the boys came up and helped Tom and Bob get their boat off.

Tom told about Bob's fight, and when the Columbia boys knew the new student had really vanquished the bully of Berkley Academy they set up a rousing cheer.

Bob was elevated in the minds of the boys to the pedestal of a hero.

But he was a modest and retiring fellow, and he couldn't help blushing like a school girl as he listened to the encomiums and congratulations that were lavished upon him.

Meantime Dan Kennard was vowing vengeance upon Bob as well as Tom Beverly.

"I'll drive the beggar out of Columbia Academy yet in disgrace, if money can do it. I suppose Bob Stanley will get into the Columbia nine, since he seems to be hand and glove with Tom Beverly, who has been re-elected captain by the Champions. Champions, indeed! Well, they shan't carry off the pennant this year! I've got a scheme in my mind. We'll beat Columbia this season by fair means or foul," said Dan in determined tones.

## CHAPTER II.

### BOB STANLEY'S NEMESIS.

It was a delightful day on the river. Bob Stanley went for a long row down stream.

They passed Berkley Academy, which stood on a high bluff, and at last made a landing in front of a little water-side hotel, which was much patronized by the students of the rival academies.

Bob and Tom were enjoying a lunch in one of the little private dining stalls, which were a feature of the establishment, when the sound of a familiar voice reached their hearing.

"That's Dan Kennard's voice," said Bob.

The two boys glanced through the window, and they saw the captain of the Berkley Baseball Club entering the hotel.

He was accompanied by a tall, dark-visaged man, with a fierce black mustache, which owed its raven hue to dye.

At the sight of Dan Kennard's companion Bob started, and he exclaimed:

"That man here and in company with Dan."

"Then you know the fellow?"

"Yes and no."

"I don't understand you."

"Well, I'll explain. But I hope you will not let what I am about to tell you go any further."

"Certainly not, if you so wish."

"Tom," then said Bob, impressively, "I believe there is a mystery in my life, and that the man we have just seen in company with Dan Kennard is concerned in it."

"Indeed, I declare, Bob, this seems quite melodramatic."

"I am in real earnest. I believe the dark-faced man is my Nemesis."

"Ah," replied Tom, seriously. "What is his name?"

"That I do not know."

Tom looked very much surprised.

"Did you not say just now that he was your Nemesis?"

"That is why I said I knew him, and yet did not know him."

"You are becoming more and more obscure. But you are going to explain."

"Yes. You must know that I am an orphan, and the only living relatives I have are Dan Kennard and his father."

"And they are worse than no relations at all."

"That's so. But what I am getting at is this: On three different occasions my life has been placed in deadly peril through no fault of my own."

"Your experience is decidedly out of the common."

"It is indeed. But, to continue. On each of the three times, when I have been in supreme peril, I have seen the same man who is now with Dan Kennard, either before or after the moment of my terrible danger."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Tom. "And you have just now seen him again?"

The lad's tone contained a suggestion of startling import.

Tom looked at Bob eagerly, and he noted an expression of anxiety on the lad's features.

"Can it be that there is something more than a mere coincidence in this affair. Is there some dark mystery behind the circumstance of that man's appearance each time you have been in peril?" Tom added.

"I have long since began to believe so. Yes, Tom, it surely seems to me that some cowardly enemy who has a powerful motive for wishing to end my career is employing that dark-faced man against me."

"You must have sought to find out who or what the mysterious man is?"

"Yes, but all my inquiries looking to that end have failed."

"How so? Did no one know the man?"

"No. It always happened that he was a stranger at places where I was imperiled."

"Strange, very strange," said Tom, reflectively.

"The man seemed to appear only to vanish mysteriously."

"Dan Kennard knows him."

"Yes, that is now evident."

"Bob, I wonder if your cousin and his father are concerned in this affair. You let drop a sort of a hint during your controversy with Dan on the river bank that there had been some injustice relating to money done you by them."

"Yes, but I never thought Dan or his father could be concerned in the mystery of the strange man, who has assumed the character of my Nemesis. I did not suppose they were bad enough for that."

"But what do you think, now that you see the man whose presence you have grown to dread, evidently on familiar terms with Dan."

"The circumstance is suspicious."

"I think so, too."

"But I cannot see any motive for my uncle or cousin to employ the stranger's fatal agency."

"Perhaps you have overlooked some point in the circumstances of your life."

"It may be so. At all events I will briefly tell you how I believe I have been wronged by my uncle, Dan's father."

Bob paused for a moment as if to collect his thoughts, and then he said:

"My father and Dan's father were the only children of their parents, who were quite wealthy. Dan's father was always a wild, passionate fellow. My father, who was always steady, was the favorite. Both were clerks in the banking house owned by my grandfather in New York City."

"At one time, when the funds representing almost all my grandfather's fortune were in the vaults of the bank, a great robbery was perpetrated."

"During the night the money was abstracted from the vault mysteriously."

"An investigation was immediately set on foot. Developments of a startling nature ensued. Circumstances seemed to incriminate my father."

Then the matter was hushed up for the honor of the family, which was dearer to my grandfather than money."

"He was financially ruined, and although my father swore to him on the day of his death that he was innocent, when grandfather's will was read it was found that my father was disinherited."

"Though there was no property to divide, the mere fact that he was disinherited almost broke my innocent father's heart."

"Soon after that Dan's father went West, it was supposed."

"In three years he returned, possessed of a large fortune, which he assured everyone he had gained in the gold mines of California."

"Meanwhile my father learned that Dan's sire had not been in California at all, but during his three years' absence he had been living quietly in Paris."

"Then a terrible suspicion dawned upon my father's mind, but he dared not make it public."

"He thought his own brother, Dan's father, must have robbed the bank and cunningly conspired so that circumstances should brand him as the thief."

"But proof was wanting, and when my poor father, whom misfortune seemed to relentlessly pursue, came to die the dark mystery was still unsolved."

"Of course the brothers were always estranged, and I believe Dan's father knew of my parent's terrible suspicion regarding him."

At midnight, a year ago, I was called suddenly to the death bed of a man who had been in the service of Dan's father ever

since the latter returned from Paris with the wealth he claimed to have acquired in California.

"I found the man dying."

"He had not strength enough left to speak when I reached him."

"But with a last dying effort he placed in my hand a singular writing. It was a sheet of paper, covered with figures and dots. I have since learned it is a cipher, but as yet neither myself, nor anyone to whom I have applied for assistance, has succeeded in making any sense out of it. All my attempts to discover the key of the cipher have failed."

"Now, granted that the mysterious document given me by the old servant of Dan's father—I can never bear to allude to him as my uncle—contains some secret, which the latter fears to have known, and that he is aware the cipher is in my hands, what might be inferred?"

Bob paused for a reply.

"I judge one might think your uncle meant that you should not live to solve the mystery of the cipher. That is to say, of course, if we admit the unknown Nemesis is your uncle's secret agent," said Tom.

"It may be so."

"Great Scott! Bob, who knows but that cipher tells the secret of the great bank robbery of years ago?"

"I have thought of that."

"If the cipher proclaims—proves—the guilt of your uncle, naturally such a man would spare no means to destroy it or the one who held it in keeping."

"You reason rightly."

At that moment sounds were heard in the adjoining stall.

Someone had entered it. Bob and Tom immediately became silent.

The ensuing moment they caught the tones of Dan Kennard, as he was giving his order to the waiter.

Bob leaned nearer Tom and whispered presently:

"Let us wait and listen in silence. Perhaps we shall learn something, for the dark man I fear is still with Dan."

Bob had heard a hoarse, foreign sounding voice, utter a commonplace remark, in the adjoining stall, after Dan had given his order for refreshments.

The boy had heard the tones of the Nemesis before that day, so he was now sure the man of "the fatal presence" was yet Dan's companion.

Eagerly Bob and his friend listened after that.

"Then I can rely on you," said Dan very soon.

"Yes, when I receive ze gold, young monsieur," replied the man of mystery in a foreign accent.

"He is French," whispered Tom.

Bob nodded with a gesture to enjoin silence.

"Then we shall win the championship in the baseball field this season. Hurrah for Berkley! I shall surely triumph over Tom Beverly and that beggarly cousin of mine," replied Dan.

Just then the waiter re-entered Dan's presence, but quickly retired.

"Here is a discovery! Dan Kennard has a conspiracy on foot against the champions of Columbia Academy. He means foul play against our players," whispered Tom.

At that instant the report of a pistol shot sounded in the next stall, and with a loud cry Bob Stanley reeled and fell at Tom's feet.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE FIRST CHAMPIONSHIP GAME OF THE SEASON.

Between the dining stalls of the riverside hostelry the partitions were only about seven feet high.

By standing on a chair anyone could look over the partition.

When Bob Stanley fell at his feet as the report of a pistol sounded from the stall occupied by Dan Kennard and the stranger, Tom caught sight of a man's head and shoulders disappearing behind the partition, while a cloud of powder smoke circled up.

The head and shoulders belonged to the mysterious stranger.

"Good heavens!" cried the excited boy, dropping upon his knees beside the fallen youth, "the Nemesis has shot him!"

The report of the pistol had scarcely died away when Tom sprang to his feet and darted out to the barroom.

"There has been murder done here! The black mustached man with Dan Kennard shot Bob Stanley! Don't let him escape. I saw him fire the shot over the partition!" cried Tom.

A rush was made by all hands for the stall occupied by Dan and his mysterious companion.

Tom was the first to enter the compartment, and behind him came the landlord and the others.

On the threshold Tom halted in surprise, for he saw that Dan Kennard was now alone in the stall.

"Where is he? Where is your black muzzled comrade?" cried Tom fiercely.

"He went out a moment ago. Just after the report of a pistol sounded from the next stall!" replied Dan, coolly.

"The villain has escaped. But the shot was fired from here, and you know it!" cried Tom.

"You lie! What! do you mean to implicate me in an attempt at murder!" retorted Dan hotly.

"Let search be made for the assassin by some of your men, landlord, while the others assist me to carry Bob out into the air. I don't know if he is dead yet or not," said Tom, and without heeding Dan Kennard's last remark he ran into the stall where Bob Stanley had fallen.

Just then Bob uttered a groan and opened his eyes.

A waiter hastened to bring him a glass of wine, and when he had drunk it he sat up. The bullet which had felled him had, it was then found, only inflicted a scalp wound.

In half an hour Bob declared he was all right.

Meantime search had been made for the man of mystery.

But no trace of him was found in the neighborhood.

The Nemesis had vanished in as remarkable a manner as he had heretofore done on each previous occasion when Bob Stanley's life was endangered.

Dan Kennard had rowed away in a boat in which he had come to the hotel, and no attempt had been made to detain him.

Bob and Tom presently entered the old fisherman's boat and set out to row back upstream.

Suddenly Bob clapped his hand to his breast-pocket and uttered a surprised exclamation.

"What is it?" cried Tom.

"My pocketbook, containing the original cipher given me by the dying servant of Dan's father is gone," replied Bob.

"The Nemesis must have entered our stall and robbed you while I ran out to give the alarm."

"Yes. But fortunately I have a complete copy of the cipher at the academy."

"Bravo! We may defeat your foes yet. But now, Bob, we know the Nemesis seeks your life because of the cipher."

"Yes, and my relations must be the hidden foes who employ him."

The boys continued to converse until they arrived at the hut of the fisherman to whom the boat belonged.

Leaving the craft there, they proceeded on foot to Columbia Academy, near by.

Next day there was a practice game of the Columbia ball club.

The club was composed of two nines, called the First and the Second. The former only played in the academy league games.

Bob Stanley was on the ball grounds.

One of the first nine chanced to be unexpectedly absent, and Tom Beverly asked Bob if he could play.

"A little," he modestly replied, and he was prevailed upon to take the absent player's place.

Bob proved to be a great surprise to the ball players. The truth was he had played baseball for years, in country clubs, and he was a phenomenal batsman, baserunner, and general all round player. As a pitcher, however, he excelled, though he was almost as good on third base. The Columbians were greatly in need of a new battery—one with which the Berkley club was not familiar.

After it was seen Bob could bat and catch well, he was put in the box. After that no one could make a base hit. Bob had some curves down fine, and he completely rattled his school-mates.

"Well, I'll be blown if we haven't struck a bonanza in you, Bob. Of course you must join our nine of Champions. Dick Dare has been called home for the season, so we are one man short, anyhow," said Tom, at the close of the practice game, and so Bob was duly enrolled as a member of the Champion nine of Columbia Academy.

There was a great deal of excitement in both the rival academies, as the day drew near for the first league game of the season.

It was to be played between the Columbia champions and the Berkley nine captained by Dan Kennard.

Meantime, after the Columbians found out what a treasure they had in Bob, he was kept out of the practice games as much as possible, for fear Berkley spies might get on to his style of pitching, by watching his work in the box.

Tom Beverly's health, meanwhile, did not improve. In fact, he steadily grew worse.

At last he had to give up, and just two days before the date of the champions' first game of the season, he had a fainting fit, and the doctor ordered him to go home at once and rest for the season.

Poor Tom was almost heartbroken, but as it was a question of life or death for him, he had to obey the orders of the doctor.

The entire club accompanied Tom to the depot to see him off, and all pledged him their word to do their best to defeat their rivals.

That very day a new student arrived at the Columbia Academy. The newcomer gave the name of Bert Cliff, and claimed to be a good ball player. A man was needed to play in Tom's place, and, after Bert Cliff had shown in a practice game that he was more than an ordinary clever player, he was taken on the league nine.

Now the departure of Tom had left the champions without a captain, and at a special meeting of the club Bob Stanley was elected captain for the season without a dissenting vote.

The sun arose in a cloudless sky on the day set for the first great championship game of the Academy league.

The game was to be played on the Berkley grounds, and so, of course, the advantage was with the players whose home grounds was to be the scene of contest.

At an early hour Bob was out practicing with his catcher and coaching his men on the field at Columbia.

The game at Berkley grounds was to be called at 3 p. m.

Long before that time the grandstand and the bleaching boards were crowded. Thousands of spectators were present, and the excitement ran high.

No pool selling was allowed on the grounds, but outside the pool sellers were at work.

The champions were the favorites two to one.

The toss was won by the Columbia champions, and they sent the Berkleys to the bat.

"Play!" shouted the umpire when the men were in position and all ready for the game.

The old battery of the Columbias was in the box. Bob Stanley first chose to play third base. Dan Kennard was an enraged and jealous boy indeed when he found his despised "poor relation" had become the champions' captain.

Just before the game opened Bert Cliff, the last acquisition of the champions, had mysteriously disappeared from the ball grounds for a few moments.

At that time he met a dark, black mustached man behind the players' dressing-room. The latter was Bob Stanley's Nemesis. He and Cliff whispered together for a moment, and when they parted the baseball player had something in his pocket which the dark stranger had given him.

The great game was well contested. Bob Stanley proved a wonder on third base, and his brilliant play in that position won the plaudits of the crowd.

But when he presently entered the pitcher's box, and retired man after man of the opposing players, without a hit, the enthusiasm of the spectators became intense.

Still, after awhile, the Berkleys occasionally scored a hit, and the game ran close, and at the end of the eighth inning the score stood Columbia, 6—Berkley 4.

Berkley went to the bat first in the ninth inning, and before they were retired they had scored four runs.

Bob Stanley was indignant and surprised, for the four runs won by the Berkleys were directly chargeable to Bert Cliff. The errors were made in such a way that Bob's suspicions were awakened that Bert Cliff meant to "throw" the game.

But it was too late now to dispense with him in the last inning.

The score was now Columbia 6—Berkley 8.

The former had to make two runs for a tie, and three to win. Columbia went to the bat.

Two men were put out in quick succession by the Berkleys, and one of the victims was Bert Cliff, who struck out at the home plate.

The excitement was now intense. The third man of the Columbias to the bat was Bob Stanley.

It all depended on him now. If he struck out the game was lost. If ever Bob felt anxious it was now.

But his excitement did not make him lose his nerve.

He waited for a ball to suit him. At the second pitch he thought he had it and he was right.

Bob struck the sphere a heavy blow. It was a "daisy cutter" between first and second, and it took Bob safely to first.

The next man to the bat drove the ball through center field for a base hit, and Bob went down to second.

On a wild pitch he stole third.

The man at the bat knew it now depended on him to save the game and bring Bob in. He was one of the best batters of the Columbias. Bob's hope of scoring was now high.

Just before he went to the bat Bob had taken a drink of water. While at the home plate he had grown dizzy. The feeling had increased until now, as he stood on third waiting for a chance to run in home, his head fairly swam.

"Two strikes!" was the cry that almost immediately announced that the batsman had again failed.

A breathless moment or two, and then—whack! Ah! that time the willow met the sphere. Away it went to left field.

Bob started to run home, but all at once everything turned black before his eyes, and half way between third base and the home plate he reeled and fell.

"Out! Side out!" called the umpire, as the ball was fielded back to the catcher on home plate like lightning.

Columbia was beaten, and while a mighty shout went up from the crowd it was seen that Bob lay where he had fallen.

The players came rushing toward him, while one of the scorers, a veteran of the diamond, said to the others:

"I'll wager something that man was drugged!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### AFTER THE GAME—BOB AND HIS FRIENDS.

The excitement was most intense. The fall of the captain of the Columbia nine occasioned not only alarm and interest among the rival baseball clubs, but the entire audience shared their emotions.

Bob Stanley had for the first time demonstrated the fact before a critical audience that he was really a brilliant star of the diamond—a phenomenal all-round player.

From the outset the admirers of the game had watched the boy baseball captain with critical keenness. His skill, coupled with his fine, manly appearance, and gentlemanly conduct throughout the entire game, had made him a favorite with the best class of the spectators.

Particularly was this so as regarded the non-partisan portion of the audience—such as, with the fairness apart from sectional or personal feeling, desired that the best club might win.

As the members of the rival nines gathered around Bob, a great many of the spectators also hastened across the field from the grandstand and the bleaching boards.

Bob still remained motionless where he had fallen.

Several of his own nine, who were the first to reach him, knelt about him, and as it was seen that he was white and still as though he might never move again, great was the consternation of his comrades.

They all knew Bob was in the very pink of condition physically when the game was called.

While the boys sought to revive their unfortunate captain, they looked into each other's troubled faces, and it seemed that almost the same idea occurred to each.

"There's something dead wrong about this. We'd have won the game if Bob hadn't been so strangely taken 'queer,'" remarked tall Sam Heaton, the second baseman.

"Dead wrong it is as you say. But you don't think Bob is—is a goner?" answered another Columbia boy.

"I don't know. It looks so. I can't feel his heart beat and he don't breathe."

"Oh, he mustn't die like this."

"A doctor! A doctor! We must have one!"

"Yes, I'll run for a physician. Can anyone point out one in the crowd?"

"That tall man yonder," answered a stranger.

"Yes, I am a doctor," said the professional man addressed, and he was even then hastening through the throng, with the intuitive desire of his calling to render assistance; he reached Bob in a moment.

"Your verdict? Tell us the worst, doctor. Will he live or die?" asked Sam Heaton.

A circle of bright young faces confronted the physician who had been at work with the unconscious lad some moments. The solicitude of the Columbia boys was becoming painful. They could scarcely wait longer for the verdict of the doctor.

"He is coming round. He will live. Indeed, I think he will be all right in an hour. Well enough to return to Columbia at all events. But he must avoid exposure."

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The Columbia boys burst into a cheer.

The spectators joined, and in half an hour the ball ground was deserted.

In this instance there had been no failure in medical prog-

nosis. The young captain of the Columbia Academy nine had regained his senses, and his comrades had set out to return with him to the academy.

Bob rode in a covered carriage, with tall Sam Heaton, the big second baseman, Fred Dean, the third baseman, and little "Snap" Cotter, the shortstop.

"How do you feel by this time?" asked Sam as the carriage bowled along over the river road.

"Oh, I'm getting all right. But I do feel a little strange and dizzy about the head yet. But we lost that game; that's what breaks my heart," replied Bob.

"It's hard luck, and that's a fact."

"There's no luck about it, Sam. There has been foul play."

"That's what we all think."

"Yes, I know it; the moment I took that drink of water, just before going to the bat, I felt queer."

"I thought so."

"You know well enough I was good for a two-bagger on Kneal's curves if I hadn't got dizzy. And if I'd only been myself, I'd have made a run anyhow, but for the fact that I was drugged."

"Drugged!"

"Yes. Between ourselves there's no use beating about the bush. I was drugged, and that's all there is to it—only to find out who did it."

Bob's eyes began to flash, and his voice rang sternly as he pronounced the last words. He was evidently resolved that the cowardly rascal who had made Columbia lose the victory that day, and perhaps sent him near to death's portal, should, if possible, be detected and called to account.

"Whom do you suspect—anyone?" asked the little shortstop.

"Well, rather."

"Who?"

"Boys, I'm going to trust you three. You know what a miserable game Bert Cliff played all through to-day, and you all saw he always failed just where a bad play would cost us most dearly and prove of greatest value to Berkley?"

"That's so."

"You're right, Bob."

"He is a traitor."

"I suspect him."

"Anything else?" inquired tall Sam.

"Well, yes. It's my opinion there is someone behind Cliff. He's sold the game. Now there are a good many square fellows in the Berkley nine—fellows we all know wouldn't be guilty of any underhand work. But Dan Kennard, the Berkley captain, and several others, are bad enough to make any attempt against us."

"That's so."

"Well, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good," said the little shortstop.

"How is that, Snap?" Bob inquired.

"Why, the tall, brigandish chap, with the waxed mustache, who invested heavily on Berkley with the pool sellers, must have pulled off several hundred. I heard him remarking to a comrade that he had made a good day's work."

"Was he a Frenchman?" eagerly asked Bob.

"Oh, yes. A real monsieur, with the Parisian dialect."

"The Nemesis!" uttered Bob.

And he added:

"His evil hand must have been in some way behind the villainy at work to-day."

"Hello! What's that? You know him?"

All three of the boys spoke, and Bob comprehended that he had let drop a hint of the strange mystery of his hidden foe, which until that day he had kept a profound secret from all his school fellows save poor Tom Beverly.

The hunted young baseball captain experienced that desire

for confidential advisers, which all must feel to a greater or less degree in the time of doubt and trouble.

Bob was silent for a moment.

His three schoolmates looked at him a trifle curiously.

He smiled as he observed by the grin upon the chubby face of the little shortstop that he was probably wondering if he had really got all his wits back yet.

"Boys, I'm about resolved to tell you a queer story about myself," said Bob, finally.

"Do so by all means."

"Yes."

"Is it something about the Frenchman?"

"I depend on you to keep the matter a secret," continued Bob.

The promise was readily given by the three lads, and then Bob continued:

"The story is really one containing all the interesting features of my life, before I came to attend the academy."

While the boys listened with interest to him, Bob went on to tell the remarkable story, which the reader has already heard him relate to Tom Beverly.

When he had concluded, tall Ham Heaton exclaimed, excitedly:

"There's the biggest kind of a put up job against you, Bob! And the villains, who are your enemies, mean to beat our club by foul means all through this season."

"That's so," cried Fred Dean.

"But we'll stand by you, Bob. Us four will unite and make it as hot as we can for Dan Kennard, Frenchy and the rest of that mean crowd, whoever they are," said the little shortstop.

Bob felt that he had done well to confide to those three honest, true-hearted and manly boys the secret which had caused him so many perils.

He was about to speak again when suddenly there came a tremendous crash.

## CHAPTER V.

### A PERIL OF THE RIVER ROAD—AMONG DESPERATE MEN.

The occupants of the carriage uttered cries of alarm. Already the night shadows were beginning to fall, and the road along the river bank was bordered by trees, whose shade made the gathering gloom deeper there.

The embankment of the river was steep.

Here and there the road wound along very near the brink.

But still, ordinarily, it was not a dangerous way, for at every place where the road approached the edge of the river's rocky wall log sidings had been erected.

The alarmed boys observed in an instant, as the crash came, that the horses had suddenly become frightened at some object in the way, shied suddenly, and hurled the vehicle right against the low log siding that alone prevented a terrible fall to the river.

The driver was sawing upon the bits of the rearing team, which refused to advance further, and seemed intent upon a side rush over the barrier.

"Crack, crack!" fell the driver's whip upon the flanks of the terrified steeds, causing them to bound along a few paces, dragging the carriage against the barrier.

The hubs thumped against the logs, the vehicle rocked and bounded perilously, while the boys clung to their places.

The cause of the horses' fright was not discovered by any of them.

Evidently whatever it was that had caused the alarm of the team, it had appeared only to disappear again almost instantly. Crash! crash!

The carriage was backed heavily against the barrier on the high steep bank. The horses were frantic now. The sting of the lash had made matters worse for their driver, who was evidently an incompetent horseman, as well as lacking in judgment.

"Jump for it, boys! The driver must be drunk, or he is a fool. Look out! Jump, I say! The barrier is giving way. The carriage is going over the bank!" shouted tall Sam Heaton the next moment.

It was as he said.

The logs were old and rotten at that point, and the stakes which alone sustained them had long since decayed in the ground where they were driven.

As Sam cried out, he made a leap from the carriage, which was an open one.

The little shortstop, who was a marvel of activity, alighted on the ground almost as soon as Sam.

Fred Dean also leaped clear of the vehicle.

But not so Bob. He arose to leap from the carriage as Heaton gave the alarm. But although he did not realize it until he got upon his feet he was quite weak yet.

A sudden lurch of the vehicle sent him back upon the cushions of the carriage, and then—

"Crash! Crash!"

The barrier is broken, and down, down the steep fall to the deep, dark water of the river at the foot of the embankment went the carriage and horses, carrying poor Bob with them.

His comrades saw the terrible accident.

It was all over in an instant.

As the outfit disappeared through the broken railing, the driver threw himself from his place on the box. He struck heavily on the hard road bed and did not stir. The three baseball boys ran to the brink of the fall.

The carriage had been carried clear into the water. They caught a glimpse of the horses struggling frantically, held by the harness to the vehicle which was dragging them down, but they did not see Bob.

Only for an instant were the doomed animals visible through the gloaming in the water, then the sounds of their splashing ceased, and the swift tide closed over them.

The three boys began to scramble down the bank.

They meant to find and rescue Bob, if he had not drowned or been dashed to death upon the rocks.

Reaching the edge of the river, the lads could discover no trace of the young baseball captain.

They searched all along the bank in vain.

At last they began to think it must be that Bob had been drowned. They recollected his weak state. Perhaps he had been unable to swim. He might have been caught and held down in some way by the carriage.

With sad hearts and solemn faces the three friends of the lost baseball captain descended the bank, and set off on foot as swiftly as possible, meaning to carry the news of the accident to Columbia Academy as soon as they could.

The trio made the distance to the academy in a very short time, and told their sad and startling story. At once men were sent out to drag the river, at the point where the accident occurred.

A large party of Columbia boys accompanied the draggers with boats and lanterns.

It was a strange, exciting night search on the river that ensued. The drags were cast and carefully worked for hours.

Among the boys there were some excellent amateur divers and first-class swimmers.

They went to the bottom of the river again and again in quest of the body of Bob Stanley. But if the dark river had closed over him, it refused to give up its dead.

When morning came the quest in the river, which had continued all night, was further continued.

But the accession of sunlight did not bring with it an additional discovery. Still the fate of the lost boy baseball captain remained an unsolved mystery.

At length experienced river men decided that Bob's body must have been carried far away by the under current. The carriage and the dead horses were drawn to the shore and at noon the search was abandoned.

Meanwhile what had really been Bob Stanley's fate? We wish not to make a mystery of the singular incidents of the night which befell the young star of the diamond after he was hurled down the embankment with the carriage. And this statement is a tacit admission of the actual truth. Bob yet lived.

When the carriage reached the river he was still in the vehicle. But he was then hurled far out of it into the water. A strong outer current of an eddy which had its main whirlpool in an inlet, carried him in its circling waves swiftly toward the opposite bank and dashed him against some rocks on a bank.

Bob was wedged fast. But the waves had left his head above water, though the contact with the rocks had rendered him unconscious.

The very last recollection Bob had was of a struggle in the water, of a combat with the resistless current that had carried him on to the rocks.

When the boy baseballist again opened his eyes he glanced up into a dark, bearded human face, and saw all around him the rude, blackened walls of what he took to be some rude fisherman's cabin.

"He ain't dead yet, Leona. Come, gal, bring him something hot and look after him. I've got to go," said a gruff voice.

A young girl entered the room. To Bob she seemed like an angel presence. The man who had spoken passed from his sight.

The maid was probably sixteen, slender, graceful, with a clear and delicately tinted complexion, and the most perfect head of golden hair that was ever kissed by the yellow sunshine. Bob stared at her, and lifted himself up on a rude bunk which had been his resting place.

"Father found you on the river bank, and brought you home. At first we thought you were dead. But here, drink this, and then you will be stronger," said the girl, lifting a cup to his lips.

Bob drank the cup's contents as she held the cup, and the spirits it contained immediately revived him. But the next instant he heard the voice of the man who had just gone out and that of another in the outer room.

The second voice sent a thrill of absolute terror through the heart of the boy. It was a peculiar voice with a marked French dialect.

"Ze spy will be here in one moment. Ze grande opportunity is come, or he will find us out! Mon ami, you and I shall kill ze spy!"

Bob and the girl heard every word the Frenchman uttered. "The Nemesis—the mysterious foe!" Bob uttered under his breath.

"Merciful heaven! There will be murder done here!" said Leona in a thrilling whisper, as she brought her lips close to Bob's ear.

"I forgot about my find. One moment; I'll see if he is likely to cause us any trouble," said the man whose voice Bob had first heard in the cabin.

"You must feign unconsciousness, or I will not answer for your life. You have fallen among most dangerous and desperate men," again whispered the fair Leona.

Bob sank back and closed his eyes.

The man who had brought Bob there immediately looked into the room.

## CHAPTER VI.

BOB RESOLVES TO SAVE AN IMPERILED MAN.

"Ha! Has he lost his senses again?" demanded Leona's father.

"Yes, and maybe he is dead."

"Perhaps it's as well for us so. I was rash to bring him here at all."

"Quick, Gardelli! Ze man comes. He has tracked you to ze cabin," uttered the Frenchman in a whisper behind Leona's father.

"Oh, heaven! If it should be he!" groaned Leona at Bob's side.

The boy started up.

In a moment he stood erect and resolute beside the girl.

The liquor he had drank and the effort of a firm will had enabled him to call up all his energies.

The startling thought that a great crime was about to be committed, the idea that the Nemesis of his life was near, and the noble resolve that he would strive to help the one who was to be placed in peril by those deadly men inspired the boy.

"Who is coming?" he whispered to Leona.

"Some one they dread and fear," with a motion to indicate the two men in the outer room.

"Why do they fear the one who is coming?"

"Because—because—but no, no. I cannot tell you."

"What mystery is this?" wondered Bob.

But he said no more.

There came a rap on the outside door of the cabin.

Bob glided toward the door of the inner apartment.

Then Leona's hand fell upon his arm, and she said in intense and thrilling tones, that were, however, scarcely louder than a breath:

"Take care! If you are discovered you will be murdered! But will you not help me?"

"In what way?"

"To save the man who is about to enter the cabin."

"I will."

"Thank you! Thank you!"

"But they are two powerful men. Oh, if we could only convey a warning to the man outside, before he crosses the fatal threshold."

"It's too late for that now."

"Yes."

"Here. Take this, and use it if you must to save the innocent life that is threatened."

As she spoke, the girl of the riverside cabin placed a small silver-mounted revolver in Bob's hand.

"Thank you," he replied. "I'll do my best," and he felt a sense of something like a degree of security as he thought that at all events he was now armed against the Nemesis of his life, if he discovered him.

Bob gently pushed the door open an inch.

Through the opening he glanced.

He saw the man whom he dreaded, and Leona's father. The two men were seated at a rough stone fireplace. If they were armed, and he doubted not that they were, they did not show any weapons.

Again the rap on the door sounded.

"Come in," called out Leona's father gruffly.

The door opened.

It was a thrilling moment for Bob and the young girl at his side in the inner room.

A bright-faced, intelligent, keen-eyed man of about middle age entered the room.

"I beg your pardon, but the night overtook me on the river-path, and seeing the light I ventured to come here to ask for

shelter until morning. Of course, I shall pay for the hospitality if you will grant it to me," said the stranger.

"Brad Gardelli ain't the sort to turn anybody away, as long as he's got room for 'em. Come ter the fire, an' make yerself at home," replied Leona's father.

"Thank you!"

The stranger accepted a chair which Brad Gardelli pushed toward him, and the man of the cabin called out:

"I say, Leona, come an' git the stranger some grub. You'll eat, won't ye?"

"Thanks. I would be glad to get a cup of coffee."

Leona gave Bob a glance of entreaty, and went out into the other room.

As she passed by the baseball captain whispered:

"Warn him if you can."

By the light of a tallow candle which she had left behind her Bob then caught sight of a small chest in a corner near the door.

The chest stood open, and Bob observed it contained a lot of singular implements, such as he had never seen before.

Had he been better versed in such matters he would have known that the chest contained a kit of burglar's or bank robber's implements of the most complete and modern character.

Presently Bob glanced out at the three men about the fireplace again. He saw Leona placing the coffee pot on the wood fire, and he heard Brad Gardelli and the stranger conversing amicably.

Of course Bob comprehended that the two desperate men of the cabin were working out some plan to take the stranger by surprise, and it seemed probable to Bob that they had some definite purpose in delaying his fate.

Directly behind the lad was a small window in the rear wall of the cabin.

It was uncurtained, and no blind closed it.

Though he did not know it, a well-beaten path leading from the cabin to a little boat landing among the rocks, led directly by the window.

While Bob stood looking into the outer room with his back turned to the window, some one was approaching along the path mentioned.

The person who was coming to the cabin had just disembarked from a boat at the landing.

While the drama in the lone riverside dwelling seemed to delay its approach to some thrilling and startling climax, the person from the boat arrived before the window.

Could Bob Stanley have beheld the face that looked in at him behind his back he would have experienced the keenest alarm.

That face belonged to Dan Kennard.

Yes, the boy rivals and enemies of the baseball world seemed destined soon to meet under the most exciting circumstances.

"Ah!" hissed Dan Kennard under his breath as he peered into the cabin. "Ah! Bob Stanley here! Great Scott! What can it mean?"

He opened his eyes to their widest limit, and his astonishment was complete.

"He is watching at the door. He has a pistol in his hand. Ah! He is eavesdropping, and has the means of defending himself. The Frenchman was to be here. I must get into the cabin and warn Gardelli, for I'll swear he is ignorant of the fact of his being thus spied upon!" said Dan Kennard mentally. Then he glided on.

Just as Dan disappeared from the window the Frenchman arose, saying:

"I'll bring in some more wood."

He passed behind the stranger. Bob's eyes were upon him. He saw the Frenchman suddenly raise his hand and he caught the gleam of a glittering blade.

There was no time for thought. Only instant action could

avail. Bob leveled his revolver through the partially open door and fired. At the same instant the stranger leaped up, and the bullet Bob intended for the Frenchman hit the man he meant to save.

The stranger fell at the Frenchman's feet.

Gardell leaped up, shouting:

"Who fired that shot? Can it be the boy I left insensible in the next room discharged it?"

As he spoke the outer door was dashed open.

Dan Kennard bounded into the cabin.

"So you have come at last, eh?" said the Frenchman.

"As you see! But let me tell you Bob Stanley is in the next room, and he fired to hit you, when he shot the stranger."

"Sacre! It cannot be! Ze boy is at ze bottom of ze river!"

"No, no! I tell you he is there!"

"I'll see!" cried Gardelli.

He bounded for the door of the interior room, but he now found it closed and secured on the inner side.

"Ze boy zat is doomed shall no escape us! Ha! It is fate zat brought him here! Here to zis place of loneliness, into our power," said the Nemesis.

"Come and help me burst open the door," cried Gardelli, while Leona, pale and trembling, believed the boy baseballist was surely lost.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AN UNEXPECTED RETURN—BOB AT THE ACADEMY AGAIN.

The Frenchman and Dan Kennard appeared, of course, only too ready to assist in the capture of Bob Stanley.

In response to the request of Gardelli for their assistance to burst open the door, they sprang forward.

The trio all placed their shoulders against the door which Bob had secured.

They surged against it, exerting all their strength to force it open.

For several moments the stout bolt, which Bob had shot to its place, resisted the efforts of the villains.

But at length it yielded. The door flew open suddenly and Gardelli plunged into the room head first.

The others were precipitated after him. The Frenchman stumbled over Gardelli, and fell at full length. Dan Kennard alone kept his feet when the door yielded, and his ability to do so was due to the agility he had acquired as a baseball player.

"Hello! Great Scott! He's gone!" shouted Dan Kennard.

One glance around the little interior apartment had shown him that the boy captain of the rival baseball club was no longer there.

Gardelli bounded up at once, and the Frenchman at the same time regained the erect attitude.

"Ze boy has escaped! See ze window!" cried the Nemesis.

The little window through which Dan Kennard had discovered Bob in the room stood open.

Its frame worked on hinges.

The moment Bob saw the stranger fall, under the bullet he had meant for his Nemesis, the boy baseballist was so shocked that he almost lost his nerve.

He feared that he had killed, or severely wounded an innocent man.

Mechanically, almost, as he lowered his revolver, Bob closed and bolted the door.

Then he darted to the little window, opened it and passed through it; for small as it was, it gave egress to his slender, though lithe and muscular form.

Bob's natural and first impulse was to hasten from the scene of peril, and he bounded away.

But he had not gone far when the chivalrous disposition

which was an essential attribute of his many characters caused him to halt.

"I am deserting the man I promised Leona to do my best to save," thought the young baseball captain.

He reasoned if his bullet had not unfortunately proven fatal to the stranger he would, at all events, be helpless in the power of his enemies.

"It would be cowardly to run away with a loaded weapon in my hand, ready for the service of the stranger if he yet lives," decided Bob. Then he began to retrace his steps.

But as he approached the cabin again another singular and startling event transpired.

A man ran past him in the semi-gloom—for now the appearance of the moon had dispelled the darkest shadow of the night.

Bob caught a glimpse of the fugitive's face, and what was his astonishment to see that he was the stranger who had fallen under his bullet by accident.

"Stop—stop!" called out Bob.

But the stranger did not heed him. On, on he went, like the wind. Bob concluded it must be, if he heard him, he had thought the voice was that of one of his enemies.

The sounds of several persons in pursuit of the stranger came to Bob the ensuing moment. He had paused on the path that led to the boat landing.

With no previous knowledge of the place, or that he should find a boat there, Bob gained the landing. To unchain a small rowboat, enter it, and row swiftly away was but the work of a moment for the excited boy.

The stranger had disappeared in the bushes up the river bank, and evidently having heard Bob's footsteps and taking him for the other fugitives, the trio from the cabin came rushing to the landing.

But we know they came too late.

A moment and the distant shadows of the night hid Bob from their sight.

Some little distance further down the river he made a landing.

Scarcely had he set foot on land, however, when a man stepped out of the bushes, seized him by the shoulder, and before he knew what had happened snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists.

"You came from Bradfordell's cabin and I want you. We have positive information that there is a boy connected with the gang—a baseball player, too," said Bob's captor, looking at the uniform in which he had played that day and which he yet wore.

"There is some mistake, I assure you. If you will only take me to Columbia Academy you will learn I am all right," Bob hastened to say.

"You will have to see the head of the bureau first, anyhow."

Vainly Bob expostulated.

The man hurried him away to a buggy which he had in waiting near, and in it Bob was driven away across country to the county seat, Millsburg, twenty-five miles away.

About ten o'clock the next day Bob was marched into the office of the chief of police. There he was asked a great many questions that surprised him, and he was about to be remanded to a cell in the county jail, when into the office walked the very man whom Bob had accidentally shot when he fired at the Frenchman.

"Hello, Baker. What news? Hicks nabbed the boy, who is in league with the river gang, and brought him in last night, and here he is," said the chief of police, as the spy of the lone river cabin entered.

"That boy. Oh, no. Hicks has made a big blunder. That boy is innocent, and I owe my life to him," replied the stranger called Baker.

Bob's heart leaped to his throat.

He was in despair when the man who had just spoken came in.

The latter and the chief of police passed into an inner office. They were gone some moments, and when they returned Bob was discharged, and an apology was made for his arrest.

The boy baseball captain hastened out to the street, only too glad to get away without pausing to ask questions, though he was curious and mystified.

The man he had seen at the river cabin followed Bob out of the office.

"I owe you an explanation, my young friend, and a debt of gratitude which I cannot repay. Your bullet only grazed my skull, and knocked me senseless. I was on my feet while the villains were searching the inner room for you, and the girl of the cabin told me your name—that you had come there by chance, shot to save me, and fled," said the stranger.

Then, having first bound Bob to keep it all a secret for the present, the gentleman went on to acquaint the young baseball captain with some startling revelations relating to the incident that had transpired at the lone riverside cabin.

Just here, however, the secrets that were imparted to Bob cannot be set forth.

Baker provided a conveyance, and Bob was sent back to Columbia Academy.

It was then in the afternoon when the lad who was mourned for dead by all his classmates and the members of his champion baseball club, entered the campus.

If a ghost had suddenly appeared there greater excitement could not have been created. Bob was for a moment looked upon as a veritable apparition. Then such a shout as went up from the campus. The old academy grounds had never rang with such cheers.

Bob was greeted with a positive ovation.

The members of the champion baseball club carried him in triumph into the rooms of the club.

Professors and tutors hastened there to see and congratulate the returned lad, who was a general favorite.

Of course Bob had to explain.

He told a straight story, so far as it went. Acting upon certain instructions he had received from the spy of the lone cabin, however, Bob merely stated he had been found senseless on the river bank, and been carried to the cabin of a fisherman.

It was taken for granted that he had only just sufficiently revived to return to the academy.

That night there was a business meeting of the Columbia Baseball Club.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MEETING OF THE CHAMPIONS—CLIFF WINS A POINT.

Bob, as captain of the Champions, presided at the meeting of the club. It was a strictly private meeting. Only the members of the club were admitted.

The young captain and the three players of the nine whom he had made his special confidants, had decided that measures should be taken to ferret out the truth regarding the villainy which lost the opening game of the season for them.

Only Bob and the trio alluded to knew that such an investigation was on foot, they thought.

The other players, they supposed, had the idea the assemblage of that night was only to be an ordinary business meeting, for on the following day the return game between Columbia and Berkley academies was to be played on the grounds of the former.

The club room presented quite an interesting appearance on the night of which we are writing.

The members of last year's champions of the academy league were gathered about discussing the game, examining bats, balls, and looking to the gloves, masks and catcher's body-shields, which were to be used on the morrow.

By no means discouraged were the lads of Columbia academy on account of the defeat they had encountered in the first game.

It was because they were a plucky lot of boys, who never said die, that they had won the championship the previous year, and they had anticipated that they would have a hard fight to keep it the present season.

Of course no one had anticipated that they would have to contend with schemes of villainy to insure their defeat by unfair methods.

All the members of the club agreed with Bob in his belief that he had been drugged. And it was the conclusion of all that someone had put the drug in the cup of which the captain had drank just before he used it.

Were this not so—had the entire bucket of water been drugged, all of the Columbia players must have suffered.

Now, as we all know, the waiting benches of two clubs in play are always placed just outside the fifty-foot foul line to the right and left of the space reserved for batter, umpire and catcher, unless it chances only one bench is used for both clubs.

Now two benches were used in the game of Columbia vs. Berkley. Each club carried its own water bucket, lemon supply, and bat rack.

None of the Berkleys had been near the water bucket of the Columbias, which was kept at one end of their waiting bench.

Bob and his three particular confidants had reasoned on all this, and arrived at the decision that the drug of which the young captain had been the victim, must have been put in the Columbia cup by one of their own men.

This course of reasoning only confirmed Bob and his friends in the decision to which we know they had previously arrived, that the guilty rascal was Bert Cliff.

Just before the meeting of the Columbia Club was called to order Bob saw that Bert Cliff was not present.

"Hello! I don't see anything of Cliff," whispered Bob to little Snap Cotter, the shortstop.

"That's so. He isn't here. But it can't be he has taken the alarm."

"No, I don't think so."

Bob rapped the meeting to order, and just as the boys became quiet there came a rap at the door, and when the door-keeper opened the portal in walked Bert Cliff, looking as cool and composed as possible, though as Bob imagined, at least, a trifle paler than usual.

"Gentlemen and fellow members of the Columbia Nine," said Bob when Cliff had taken his place, "I have a serious charge to make against one of our members. I allude to Bert Cliff, whose poor play helped so materially to lose us the game. His errors were so manifestly chargeable to intentional mis-play that I believe he was also the party who drugged me. I therefore, move that action be taken regarding this case at once."

"I move that Cliff be expelled," said tall Sam Heaton, the second baseman, arising and addressing the chair.

"Second the motion," said Snap Cotter.

"Gentlemen, you have heard the motion—are there any remarks?" said Bob.

Bert Cliff was on his feet in a moment.

"I deny the charge in toto. If I played badly it was not by intention. It was one of my off days, that's all. I know nothing about Bob Stanley's being drugged, and I ask you to show me fair play! Let me play in one more game and if you don't acknowledge that I deserve to be retained I'll resign without a word."

Cliff spoke earnestly, determinedly, and with seeming sincerity.

There were some further remarks, and then the call was made for the question.

"You have heard the motion. All in favor of the expulsion of Cliff please rise," said Bob.

Sam Heaton, Fred Dean and Snap Cotter were among the minority who immediately arose. But the majority of the club did not vote for Cliff's expulsion. They were influenced by Cliff's manners, and they knew not the secret of the inside facts of the secret foes of their young captain.

Then, too, the spirit of fairness—of a wish to give every one his rights—which is a fundamental principle with the best class of our American boys had its influence.

The boys who did not vote for Cliff's expulsion remembered how splendid his practice work had been. They were aware, too, as all experienced baseballists are, that even the best of players will, from no known cause, occasionally have a streak of bad luck in a game—an off day.

Bob did not desire to appear too uncharitable, and so he did not try to have the motion reconsidered, or press the charge he had made against Cliff further just then.

"After all," said he to Sam Heaton, as they walked to his room, after the meeting ended, "perhaps, by allowing Cliff to remain in the club, we may gain positive proof against him, though he does not cost us another game."

Just about that time Bert Cliff left the academy campus by a rear gate, and half an hour later he met Den Kennard in the rear room of a little beer saloon, in the village near the academy.

Cliff related what had taken place.

"Good!" said Kennard. "I'm glad you did just as I said. There's nothing like having a friend in the camp of the enemy. Of course the Frenchman gave you the powder that fixed Bob Stanley?"

"Oh, yes. But I dare not throw the next game; the Columbia fellows would mob me if I did."

"I don't want to do that. Play your level best to-morrow, and so get back into their confidence."

"Do you expect to play to-morrow's game all fair and square?"

"Never you mind, but I don't mind giving you a tip; Atwood is the umpire for to-morrow's game."

"Well?" inquiringly.

"You know what a timid fellow he is?"

"I know he hasn't got sand, but he always tries to do the square thing, and you can't buy him, that's sure."

"Never you mind. I'll bet you ten to one that Berkley wins, and when the game is over you'll say that the decisions of the umpire made Columbia lose."

"I'll take you."

"Ha! Ha! There's my hand on it. Haven't only a little change with me now, but I'm sure of getting back all the money I've paid you so far on that bet, Cliff."

"I don't drop onto just what you are up to. But you and the Berkley nine can't bulldoze Atwood into giving unfair decisions in your favor, if that's what you mean."

"We shall see."

"We shall."

"Now another glass of beer and I must go."

The lads separated a moment later.

While Dan Kennard set out for Berkley academy the traitor to the Columbia club went to the academy of the latter name.

As he walked along he said to himself:

"While I can't just get it settled in my mind what Dan Kennard's little game with the umpire will be to-morrow, I am sure he will create a sensation of some kind."

Bert Cliff shook his head, a trifle doubtfully, and added:

"Dan Kennard may overreach himself yet. Somehow I'm

afraid there will be serious trouble on the ball ground to-morrow."

Bob Stanley was alone at the window of his room. It was a bright, moonlight night. He had extinguished the light, and no one could see him from without.

It chanced that he saw Bert Cliff slinking along in the shadows of the academy building, when he returned from his meeting with Dan Kennard.

"There he goes! There goes Bert Cliff now; I shouldn't wonder if he had been out somewhere to confer with our rivals," was Bob's shrewd suspicion.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MOB AND THE BOY BASEBALL CAPTAIN.

As the following day was a legal holiday all the great factories in the manufacturing town just across the river from Columbia had closed down.

All the men and boys would be free to attend the second great game of the Academy league.

That a large class of the employees of the factories were a pretty tough lot everybody in the neighborhood knew.

But what very few knew was that the factory hands had invested heavily in pools on the second game, which had been sold privately in a pool room outside the town limits.

And further, the factory men had bought Berkley exclusively. There was no doubt that they were influenced in their choice by the knowledge that Berkley had won the first game; also, by certain tips which a tall dark man, with a brigandish mustache and a French dialect had been industriously giving out among the factories ever since the last game.

Perhaps if Bert Cliff had known all this he might have formed a suspicion and also have refused to bet with Dan Kennard.

The truth was the latter had a deep scheme incubating.

But it was not original with him. The saturnine man who was the mysterious Nemesis of the boy baseball captain, had plotted the scheme.

It was founded upon a knowledge of human nature—its weakness, its avarice and its selfishness.

And the factory men certainly would not care to lose their money.

Money, the all powerful god, would hold the baton in favor of Berkley. Cupidity would reign.

The sympathies of five hundred of the ruffians of the factory town would be on the side where they had placed their hard-earned money.

There could be no doubt of all this, and when, before the hour for calling the second game of the Academy league, Bert Cliff saw the roughs from the factories to the number of hundreds crowding into the grounds, he positively turned pale.

Until that moment he had not thought about its being a legal holiday—had not anticipated the presence of the rough mob from across the river.

True, there were half a dozen special police on the ground, but they were county officers, who would run if there was a row, Cliff thought.

He presently caught sight of Dan Kennard talking earnestly with a couple of ruffians, who were showily dressed, and who sported loud jewelry.

Cliff recognized the two men. One was the keeper of a low saloon in the factory town. The other was a sporting character of unsavory reputation.

"Dan is putting up the final points against the Columbias. The two fellows he is talking with will lead, if there is trouble with the mob," thought Cliff.

Bob Stanley noticed that a large part of the audience was made up of rough-looking men and boys. But he thought nothing strange of it, for he had thought about the holiday when, as captain of the nine, he was making a little calculation regarding the probable financial results of the game.

Glancing along the tiers of seats in the grandstand, the boy baseball captain suddenly started.

He caught sight of a beautiful girlish face and recognized Leona, the girl of the lone riverside cabin.

Bob had never forgotten that beautiful face since first he beheld it the night of his peril in the river and at the isolated cabin.

The lad thought Leona was the most beautiful—in every way the most attractive girl he had ever met. Certainly he was in danger of falling in love, if he had not already done so.

"Poor girl! Beautiful Leona. Would that I dare tell her—dare warn her of what is to come. But I cannot, for I am pledged to secrecy by Mr. Baker, the man whose life was in peril at the riverside cabin," said Bob, mentally.

The next moment he caught Leona's eye. She started, paled, and then blushed and smiled as she gave him a modest little bow of recognition.

"It cannot be that pure-faced young girl knows the secrets regarding which Baker bound me to silence. When the time which she has to fear comes, I mean to be at hand to aid her," continued Bob to himself.

Soon the game was called by Umpire Atwood.

The Academy league employed four umpires. The manager assigned the umpires by lot for each game. The names of the umpires were written on separate cards and all shaken up in a hat. Then one was drawn out. The man whose name chanced to be upon that card was declared umpire for the next game.

When the game was called the Columbias, who had won the toss, took the field and sent their opponents to the bat.

Bob went into the pitcher's box at the outset.

The first man to the bat was Dan Kennard, who demanded a low ball.

Bob gave him the ball knee high and squarely over the plate. It was a fair ball, though it had one of the young pitcher's phenomenal twists to it.

Dan Kennard ought to have struck at the ball, but he didn't. "One strike!" called out Umpire Atwood, as it was his duty to do.

Atwood was a slender, pale young man, and Dan Kennard glared at him savagely, threateningly, but said nothing, while some tough shouted:

"Shoot the dude umpire."

A laugh went up from the speaker's rude comrades, and from that on they tried to confuse Atwood by guying him. But he did his duty conscientiously.

Dan Kennard struck out and retired, while the Columbia faction cheered.

The game went on. First one side and then the other scored. At the close of the sixth inning the score stood:

Columbia 4.

Berkley 4.

It was a tie. Columbia next took the bat. Bob went to the plate, and caught the first ball the Berkley pitcher gave him. It was a liner, straight through center field, clipping the daisies, and going so fast as to elude the center fielder, who made a desperate scoop at it.

Bob went down for first like a shot, while the cheers of the Columbia crowd from grandstand and benches applauded his hit. On, on to first, and down to second. Will he reach it? Yes. And looking down center field he sees the fielder still chasing the ball. Then on, going like the wind for third as he sees a chance to score a home run.

But the next instant the center fielder has the ball.

"Look out, Bob!" yells tall Sam Heaton, who was coaching his club.

But on, on, goes Bob for third base. The audience yells, the ball came in like a cannon shot from center field to second. But Bob had touched third, and was going down for the home plate. The second baseman jumps for the ball. But it goes over his head.

The shortstop catches it, wheels like a flash and sends it home just as Bob crosses the plate.

It is a close play, but every fair minded person can see that the umpire renders a just and honest decision when he shouts "not out."

Then what a scene. Dan Kennard has given some sort of a signal. The black faced shadow of the boy baseball captain is among the crowd from the factories.

"Out! out! That's out!" he cried.

The crowd takes up the yell.

"Mob the dude umpire! Kill him if he don't give Berkley fair play!" yell the ruffians.

A rush is made for the ropes.

The county police are scattered.

The ruffians seem about to enter the field, and fall upon the umpire, who is as white as a sheet, and trembling like a leaf.

"Take back that decision. Declare Bob Stanley out, or the angry crowd will kill ye!" calls out a burly rough, shaking a club at Atwood.

He lacks moral courage; Bobs knows he is about to yield to the demand of the crowd. The umpire begins to speak.

"It may be, gentlemen, I was too hasty——" he says.

"Hold!" cried Bob, suddenly leaping between the terrified umpire and the crowd. The next moment the revolver Leona had given him appeared in his hand and he added: "I'll shoot down the first man who touches the umpire."

## CHAPTER X.

### PITCHER AGAINST PITCHER—"T. C. CASE."

Bob Stanley had taken the leading ruffians, who were menacing the rather weak umpire so savagely, completely by surprise.

They had not anticipated anything like this, and possibly neither had the enemies of the boy baseball captain, who had instigated their riotous proceedings.

Before the leveled revolver in the hands of the brave and determined-looking boy the ruffians recoiled.

The flash in Bob's eyes, the firm and resolute line of his lips, his erect and fearless bearing, all told that he was fully resolved to protect the imperiled umpire at any hazard.

The moment their captain took his bold, defiant stand to save the umpire, the Columbia nine gathered around him to a man.

The boys brandished their baseball bats, and all looked as if they meant to back up Bob and stand by him to the last.

The lad's friends—the students of the Columbia Academy—and the entire better class of the audience shouted for order, and the cry "The umpire was right!" went up in a loud chorus from many voices.

But for some moments it looked as if there would be a free fight.

Bob stood firm, with the champions at his back. The ruffians shouted and threatened.

But the leveled revolver had a mighty power in the argument, and it seemed there was not one of the gang who cared to be the first to put Bob's threat to shoot down the first man who touched the umpire to the test.

"I do not wish to enter into a discussion. You fellows have come here to get up a row, or have things all your own way,

and argument would be thrown away. As captain of the Columbia nine, I will say, though, that there will be no more ball played until you clear the field and order is restored," said the determined boy to the ruffians in ringing tones.

Just then some one was heard to shout from the grand stand:

"Ze police are reinforced! Look out zat they make no arrests."

"The Frenchman! The Nemesis! Ah! He does not wish the ruffians to go too far. I'll wager something this is a put-up job of Dan Kennard's to intimidate the umpire," thought Bob.

The officers specially detailed for service on the ball ground that day, and who had fled ingloriously when the mob charged into the field, had not retreated far.

Cries of "Shame! Shame!" from the spectators seemed to have awakened the self-respect of the men to some degree at least, and they halted near the gate of the inclosure.

Meantime, the manager had sent a call from the box office, where he chanced to be engaged in counting up the receipts.

Some twenty-odd policemen who were about the streets of the town adjacent to the ball grounds were soon being hurried toward the scene of the trouble by their chief, who had in the meantime answered the manager's message by telephone, stating that his men were coming.

The wily manager started the cry that the police reinforcements were at hand. He knew that the mob was cowardly at heart, and counted upon gaining time by this innocent deception.

It proved quite successful. The mob fell back reluctantly, still shouting threats, as the alarm uttered by the mysterious Frenchman rang in their ears.

It was fully twenty minutes before the police reserve really put in an appearance.

But, meantime, as soon as the mob had quieted down and become seated on the long line of bleachers, the play was resumed.

Dan Kennard looked the picture of rage and disappointment.

"Dash the luck! Bob Stanley wins again. Confound it, the umpire can't be bulldozed now, and Cliff dare not throw this game," he said mentally.

His scowl deepened, as he thought that he would be a heavy money loser, for he had made a large investment in Berkley pools on the strength of the rascally plot to intimidate the umpire.

If the game was played out on its merits, and the best nine allowed to win, Dan Kennard felt in his heart that the chances were against him.

But he was a shrewd fellow in a way, and he yet held back a trump card.

The fact was, a new player had appeared in the Berkley nine that day.

He was announced as one of the reserve force of that club.

On the score card his name appeared as "T. C. Case, pitch."

Case had not gone into the box yet. He had held down third with such wonderful skill that, though Dan Kennard had only meant he should play one inning there to watch the style of the opposition batsmen, and so get on to their methods as a bit of diplomacy before he set in to strike them out, the result had made the Berkley captain keep third guarded by Case.

But now Dan Kennard said to Case:

"Dave, you'll——"

"Hold on. Don't call me Dave," interrupted Case, looking around in a rather frightened way.

"I beg your pardon. It slipped out. But there's no danger of your being recognized."

"I hope not."

"What I was going to say is this: You must go into the box the next innings."

"All right."

"And mind you, you do your best; from this out we must make this a 'pitcher's game.' It must be Bob Stanley against T. C. Case—Case. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Dan laughed, as if he fancied he had perpetrated a huge joke.

But T. C. Case didn't seem to appreciate it in the least.

Instead of joining in Dan's mirth he frowned and said:

"Confound you! you'll give me dead away if you keep on!"

The first of the seventh closed with one earned run for Columbia.

That was Bob's home run.

The next two men who wielded the willow for Columbia went out on a strike and a foul tip, neatly picked off the bat by the Berkley catcher.

In their last half of the seventh inning the Berkleys scored one run. Bob did his level best with his deceptive curves and "drop balls," but T. C. Case got on to his work for a base hit, and finally scored.

When the eighth inning opened the rival baseball clubs were still a tie.

Now the score was:

Columbia 5.

Berkley 5.

When play was called for the eighth T. C. Case went into the box.

The audience, as well as both nines, were now worked up to a great state of excitement. Every baseball devotee knows that since the great national game has become a veritable science with the experts, many a game depends upon the pitcher. Indeed he is by far the most responsible man of a nine; upon his ability to strike out the batsman depends the issue.

It was evident to all now that the rest of the great championship game of the Academy league was to be a battle of the ball tossers, just as Dan Kennard hinted to T. C. Case.

Bob watched his rival in the battery of the Berkleys, noted how he balanced the ball, and when at last it left his hand and went over the home plate, making a sudden dip, so that the batsman, completely deceived, thrashed the air three feet over the plate, Bob had to acknowledge mentally that T. C. Case knew his business.

The next pitch was a real wizard toss. The ball made an "incurve," and again the bat met only empty air.

The crowd began to cheer, and T. C. Case smiled confidently. His cool, deliberate methods Bob had never seen equaled save among the members of the professional leagues.

T. C. Case was as calm and unconcerned as a Keefe or a Clarkson might have been.

"That fellow has had long experience in first-class clubs, and his clean-shaven face has a mighty old look, By George, Bob, I should say he was old enough to be the father of any of our fellows!" said tall Sam Heaton to Bob.

## CHAPTER XI.

### EXCELLENT WORK ON THE DIAMOND.

Bob scanned the face of T. C. Case closely after that, and he saw that Sam Heaton was right.

Certainly T. C. Case was double the age of any of the other players in either of the nines.

And Bob made another discovery. The face of T. C. Case looked as if it had recently been deprived of a hirsute appendage that might have entirely changed his expression.

Bob saw that the pitcher's upper lip had lost a mustache very lately.

Some way Bob began to "smell a rat," as little Snap Cotter, the shortstop, said later on.

Still it wouldn't do to make any charges that he could not prove.

In about three minutes three strikes had been called on the first man of the Columbias to the bat, and he was declared out.

The victim was Fred Dean, the Columbia's third baseman.

"I tell you, fellows, that T. C. Case is a corker, and no mistake. He seems to be able to change his style of pitching at will, in several different ways. Every ball he gave me came with a different twist. I'm afraid we can't pound him for a single run," said the third baseman, as he took his seat on the players' bench.

The crowd cheered the new Berkley pitcher until they were hoarse.

As Fred Dean was retired, Dan Kennard exclaimed to one of his men, exultantly:

"We've got 'em now. They can't get on to Case's balls, I'll bet. And as for pounding him out of the box. Oh, ho! The best in the land couldn't do that! If the Columbias only knew our little secret they wouldn't have the heart to try and hit Case at all."

The second man of the Columbias called to the bat was "tall" Sam Heaton.

Sam was one of the sluggers of the champions, one of the heaviest and safest batters of the academy league, and usually a hard man for any ball tosser to strike out.

"Do your level best, Sam. Wait for your ball. You will hit him," said Bob, encouragingly, as Sam took his heavy spring bat and walked to his position at the plate.

Bob wanted to give Sam courage, but the captain of the champions was really far from feeling as confident of the tall second baseman's success as his words seemed to imply.

On the contrary, Bob was fearful that Sam might be retired on strikes.

As he counted on Sam for a run more than any one else in the nine, Bob's anxiety and suspense now became almost painful.

He kept his eyes riveted on the new pitcher, for he knew that when it came his turn to face Case all he could learn of the stranger's style of pitching would be of the greatest value.

Sam Heaton was, no doubt, for once in his life, a little nervous, as Bob could plainly see. The first ball Case gave him seemed to him all right, and he made a tremendous overhand smash at the sphere. But the willow only met the contact of the empty air, and again the crowd cheered and yelled.

Again T. C. Case shot the sphere through space, in his own peculiar zig-zag style, that made it so difficult for a batter to "judge" the ball or hit it.

That time Sam did not offer.

He waited. Two more balls passed. The second was fair, but Sam seemed too timid to chance it.

"Two strikes!" called the umpire.

Sam flushed hotly. The crowd yelled, and a shrill-voiced urchin shouted:

"He's a nudder victim!"

The next ball came in like a cannon shot. It was a "drop," and as it almost touched the plate, in a sudden and wonderful downward curve, Sam caught it on the end of his bat, though. Crash!

As bat and ball came together there was a shout from the adherents of the champions.

The ball went straight over the pitcher's head. He made a jump for it, but missed it. The shortstop, however, made a running catch that was a splendid exhibition of skill, and sent the ball speeding to first.

But it was a little high for the guardian of the bag. He had to reach upward.

Sam Heaton, meantime, had gone down for "first" like lightning. Sam was a regular sprinter when his blood was up.

As the first baseman leaped up to reach the ball, above his head, Sam dropped and slid in, grasping the bag with his hand before the ball was fairly held by the baseman.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Columbia! Columbia!"

Sam heard the crowd yell.

That was a proud moment for the tall ball player.

He had made a base hit anyhow.

The next man to the bat was little Snap Cotter. The shortstop missed two balls, and Bob was about sure he would strike out when the cunning little shortstop "bunted" the ball and tried to beat it to first.

But the catcher got it and the sphere went over the head of Snap and into the hand of the Berkley first baseman, long before he got there.

Two men out and no score. Only one man on the bases.

The next man to the bat was an indifferent batsman at all times. But he was one of the coolest, most phlegmatic of the boys. A heavy, fat, good-natured fellow, not a fast runner, but having great muscles, and when he ever did hit the ball he always gave it a tremendous drive.

"I'd give something handsome if I could only take Fatty Parke's place at the bat. He's a victim and Sam's hit won't count," muttered Bob to himself, as he walked out to watch and coach his players.

Whether it was chance or skill no one could say. But certain it was the man at the bat hit the ball a glancing blow. It dropped right at the batter's feet, but it was inside the line, so he ran for first.

T. C. Case and the catcher both sprang for the ball.

It really belonged to the catcher, being nearest him.

But the new pitcher seemed to want all the credit, so he made a dive for it and collided with the catcher.

Both missed the ball, and while Sam dashed down to second the heavyweight of the champions safely reached first.

But that was all. The next man at the bat struck out, and Sam and the weighty player were left on bases.

"Well, I'll be the first man at the bat in the ninth. But the innings are now in favor of the Berkley Club," said Bob, as his men went out and he took his place in the box.

The first man to face him was T. C. Case.

Bob made up his mind to strike him out if he could do it. He pitched as he had never pitched before. Vainly the wonderful new pitcher pounded the air.

"Three strikes and out," was the announcement of the umpire in short order.

It was one, two, three after that for each of the following batters, and then the sides changed.

The crowd who favored Columbia and the honest portion of the audience greeted Bob with a perfect ovation as he came in from the box.

Now came the tug of war.

The crisis was at hand.

The Columbias opened the ninth inning at the bat.

Bob was first striker.

The first ball he got he allowed to pass unnoticed, so with the second and third. Still he didn't have a strike called.

The fourth ball Bob "judged." It was one of the "incurves" he himself often used.

"Whack!" the willow cracked the sphere, with tremendous force.

Away it went like a shot; Bob ran for first. That bag was now guarded by Dan Kennard. He made a leap on the line, as Bob came in, trying to "shut him out," while the second baseman, who by a high spring had caught the ball, sent it to first.

Bob saw the game of his enemy, and dashed against him

with full force. Down went Dan in the dust, and over his head went the ball.

Bob leaped over him, touched first and darted on for second.

## CHAPTER XII.

"T. C. CASE" UNMASKED—THE BEAUTY OF THE LONE CABIN AGAIN.

The catcher ran for the ball. Bob gained second, and Dan Kennard picked himself up, covered with dust, and rushed in home, shouting savagely:

"Judgment! Judgment! He ran me down and prevented my catching the ball! I demand that Bob Stanley be declared out!"

"Not much!" shouted Bob, also walking in. "He was in my way right on the line. He had no right to try the old dodge of 'shutting me out!'"

"Right. Not out. Hold your place, all. Play ball!" decided the umpire.

There were plenty of hisses from the ruffians, and but for the police another attempt might have been made to mob the umpire.

The game went on.

The next man got onto T. C. Case for a base hit, and Bob got to third. A bold dash on a passed ball, which the catcher just missed, carried Bob in home.

Now the tie was broken in the favor of Columbia.

Whack!

Five minutes later another man hit Case. At the opening of that inning the scientific ball tosser had become suddenly "rattled."

But why?

He alone knew.

All at once he had caught the eye of a thick set, red-faced man in the audience, and observed a look of unmistakable recognition on the face of the latter.

"Good heaven. Bafton here! I'm lost! The jig is up!" said T. C. Case, mentally.

The cunning of his hand then failed him. It was not the skill of the champions so much as his sudden disability to use his skill that enabled the Columbias to "get in on him," as they now did.

Most pitchers get "rattled" when they are batted heavily. It seemed so to be the case with the new pitcher.

Before the champions were put out three earned runs were scored.

Not to dwell too long on the game we may add that the Champions succeeded in putting out the Berkley nine with one earned run in the last of the ninth inning.

So the Champions won.

The score stood:

Columbia 8.

Berkley 6.

Probably there never was a more enraged crowd of roughs than those who returned to the factory town across the river that night, having lost all their money on the Berkleys.

And Dan Kennard was in a savage mood.

He took Case aside and said:

"Confound you! You threw the game! I've a mind to break your head! You went to pieces all at once. You can't make any excuse. An old professional like you could have won the game for us if you would."

"You don't know. I—— Good heavens! There he is!"

"George Carl, I arrest you for stealing from the treasury of the L—— League Club. Come with me," at that moment exclaimed a man who had slyly crept up behind Dan Kennard and the new pitcher of the Berkley nine.

The man was the thick-set, red-faced personage who had caused the pitcher so much alarm in the box.

"All right. I'll go with you," replied Carl, alias Case, who knew the officer, for such Bafton was, would not stand any nonsense.

Bob Stanley and several of the Columbias came up just then, and Dan Kennard beat a hasty retreat.

"What does this mean? Why have you arrested the new Berkley pitcher, sir?" asked Bob of the officer, civilly.

"He is George Carl, the runaway league pitcher, who robbed the treasury of the L—— League Club, as you have all read in the papers. He has shaved off his mustache and fixed up his face some, but I knew him at once," replied the officer.

"So another deep game to beat us unfairly has failed," exclaimed Bob.

"Certainly, and you lads deserve the greatest credit. You batted one of the best pitchers in the business. But you owe me the credit of having rattled him by showing myself in the crowd. He knew I was after him, and he lost his nerve. Of course the Berkleys will claim ignorance of his identity, but I'll stake all I'm worth that dark-faced captain of the Berkley team knew all about him."

The officer pointed at the receding form of the scheming Dan Kennard as he spoke.

Carl had nothing to say.

The officer hurried him away.

Then Bob Stanley turned to leave the ground.

As he was doing so he caught sight of the beautiful girl of the lonely riverside cabin again.

She was just leaving the grandstand.

Bob's heart began to beat faster.

He approached the beautiful girl and said, as he lifted his baseball cap politely:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Leona. But will you not allow me to escort you. I believe you are unattended."

"Thank you," replied the young girl, timidly, and she placed her fingers lightly upon the arm of the handsome young baseball captain.

"We last met and parted under singular circumstances. I am sure I have thought much of you since that night of peril," said Bob, as they walked on.

"And I have thought of you."

"I am happy to hear that. I am sure you are good and true, though the home you occupy may be the resort of those who are not fit associates for you."

"Yes, yes."

Just then the sounds of hasty footsteps sounded behind the pair.

"Look here, I'd trouble you to drop that fellow's arm," said a voice, savagely.

Bob and Leona turned.

They faced Dan Kennard.

The rivals of the diamond glared at each other. Dan looked perfectly savage. Rage and jealousy were depicted on his swarthy face.

"Did you hear me, girl. Drop that fellows' arm, I say!" he repeated in tones of insolent command.

Leona looked frightened.

Tremblingly she withdrew her hand from Bob's arm.

At the same time she gave him a look that made him think she was the victim of coercion.

Dan seized Leona's arm at once.

"Come with me," he said.

"Wait a moment. Doesn't it strike you that you are carrying things with a high hand, that you are behaving to this young lady like an insolent scoundrel!" cried Bob.

As he spoke he leaped forward, caught Dan by the collar and hurled him some distance away.

Dan and Bob would probably have immediately come to blows then but for Leona.

She sprang between them, exclaiming:

"You must not fight on my account. I prefer to go with Mr. Kennard."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the captain of the Berkley nine.

"Beauty prefers money to poverty every time! She knows I will inherit a big fortune, while you will always probably be as poor as a church mouse."

"If right and justice were to have sway, perhaps I might share the fortune you are counting on so securely," retorted Bob.

Then he hurried away, for after Leona had said she preferred Kennard's company to his, he was too much of a gentleman, and too high spirited as well, to think of forcing his attentions upon her.

But Bob was hurt, and mystified as well.

He half fancied Dan Kennard had some secret power over the young girl.

And Bob knew then that she had taken a place in his heart, from which it would be difficult to expel her.

Was he in love? Perhaps so.

At all events he acknowledged that he would be the happiest boy in the world if he only knew beautiful Leona cared for him.

A moment later Snap Cotter ran up to Bob and exclaimed:

"There's big trouble coming for you, Bob. Perhaps you had better cut and run for it."

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE NEMESIS TRIPPED—DISTURBING THE PRINCIPAL.

Bob was startled.

He knew that Snap Cotter was not one to sound a false alarm or to easily become frightened.

"What is it, Snap?" asked the young baseball captain, with a degree of anxiety in his tone which showed how anxious he was.

"Why, they are a-going to arrest you."

"Arrest me?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Why, for carrying concealed weapons and drawing them."

"Oh! That's Dan Kennard's work."

"Of course."

"Well, I was in the right."

"Of course you were. If you had not drawn the revolver just as you did, the chances are Umpire Atwood would have fared badly at the hands of the mob."

"Yes."

"But it's against the law to carry concealed weapons."

"Well, I'll come out all right, I guess. Seriously, you didn't think, for a moment, I'd run away?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well, Snap, I am surprised."

"You don't understand."

"Well, will you please make your meaning clear then?"

"What I meant was you were merely to run away to keep out of the hands of the officer until you got some one ready to go bail for you—that's to save you the disgrace of going to jail."

"Oh, I see. I guess you are right. Come along, Snap. Let's hunt up Principal Walsingham of Columbia. I am sure he will go bail for me."

"So am I. Yonder is the man who has been instructed to arrest you. The big Dutchman."

"He doesn't look like the winner of a foot race," replied Bob, lightly.

Then he and Snap darted away.

They were pretty near the gate, and at once mingled in the crowd that was now surging through it on the way out of the ball park.

As the two lads disappeared the huge Dutch policeman caught sight of them and recognized Bob.

"Hallo! dere he vos gone, mit himself. Stop dose vellers somedimes!" he shouted.

And the way he waddled forward was a sight that made the spectators smile all over their faces.

Certainly there was little danger of Bob being overtaken by the ponderous Teutonic member of the force.

Glancing back over his shoulder, Snap burst into a laugh as he witnessed the burly representative from the "fatherland" attempting the pursuit.

But the young baseball captain's only danger did not lay in the rear.

There was one in advance of him, though as yet unseen, whom he had good cause to fear.

That individual was the Nemesis, the Frenchman who played the mysterious part of the boy baseballist's fatal shadow.

He was ahead of Bob when the latter and the little shortstop came out of the ball grounds.

The Nemesis was evidently posted as to this last move against Bob.

He saw the latter and his companion as they got clear of the crowd.

Instantly the saturnine countenance of the Frenchman darkened.

He smiled in an unpleasant way, and as the two boys came on he suddenly sprang from behind some men who had shielded him from Bob's sight.

The mysterious man threw himself directly in Bob's way.

His manner showed that it was clearly his purpose to prevent Bob's further retreat.

But if this had not been so his words would have established the conclusion.

"Halt! You are my prisoner. Ze officers want ze young monsieur," he cried.

As he spoke he reached forth to seize Bob by the collar.

"No you don't!" cried the young athlete.

He bounded under the outstretched arm of his secret foe as he spoke.

The Frenchman started to pursue him. But Snap Cotter was at hand.

Quick as a flash the lithe and agile little shortstop tripped up the swarthy rascal.

He fell heavily.

Bob and Snap then ran at full speed. Catching up with an omnibus bound for the academy they leaped on the rear steps, and amid a cloud of dust vanished with the vehicle from the sight of the Frenchman.

"I guess he won't trouble you any more just now," said Snap, cheerfully, as he and Bob rode away.

The omnibus soon reached the academy.

There Bob and Snap alighted, and they at once directed their steps to the principal's office.

Professor Walsingham was a dignified old gentleman, a regular book-worm, and rather eccentric. But with all he was a kind-hearted personage, and proud of anything that added to the glory of the old Columbia Academy, baseball included.

Bob knocked rather timidly upon the office door, for he knew the principal was always strict and inclined to show little favor to a student who became guilty of any offense against law and order.

"Come in."

The answer to Bob's rap came in stern and rather impatient

tones. The young baseball captain opened the door and entered, cap in hand, followed by Snap Cotter.

The principal was seated at his desk, poring over a big volume of ancient history, and all about him were strewn papers, and a big pile of manuscript lay at his elbow.

The fact was the principal was getting up a text book on ancient history, which was his pet hobby.

And what made it bad for Bob, he was just now in a rather unpleasant frame of mind because he had discovered that some of the leading authorities differed in dates of important events connected with the subject he had under consideration.

The two lads were favored by a sharp, stern glance through the spectacles of the learned man.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"I am in trouble," frankly replied Bob.

"How so? Have you let Berkley beat again in the ball game?"

"No, sir. Columbia won to-day."

The stern old face relaxed a trifle.

"Good. Very good."

"But we came near being beaten. An attempt was made to intimidate the umpire. His life was in danger at the hands of a band of roughs from the factory town. I drew a revolver and held the rascals back. Now someone is seeking to have me arrested on the charge of carrying concealed weapons."

"I'd like to see them do it! What? Arrest one of my pupils for behaving like a brave fellow. No, no. In the time of the first Roman empire—"

Bob looked at Snap in despair. He knew that when the principal began to talk of the first Roman empire he was good for hours, and lucky was he who, thereafter, got in a word edgewise.

The rattle of wheels and a broad, Teutonic voice shouting was just then heard.

"I vos go in mit dot school-houses und fotch out dot poy!" came as a timely stay to the flood-gates of talk the voluble old professor was about to turn on, and immediately the big Dutch policeman waddled into the office.

He had quickly procured a vehicle and driven to the academy after Bob's flight from the baseball grounds.

The lads retreated as the officer came in.

The principal arose—a stately, gray-haired figure calculated to command respect—and said, as he waved the Dutch policeman back, with the dignity of one of the old Roman councilors, of whom he loved to discourse.

"I will go bail for Robert Stanley in any amount. Accompany us at once before a magistrate. My pupils are all gentlemen, sir, and I uphold the lad in what he has done."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### LEONA'S LETTER—BOB MAKES A PLOT OF HIS OWN.

"Bravo! Isn't the old man a trump," whispered Snap in Bob's ear rather irreverently.

"Vell, sir, I subbose dot settles it. Uf you say so I goes mit you und dot poy mit dot justice office in," assented the big police officer.

An hour later Bob was out of his trouble. At least for the present, and the principal had given a bond of one thousand dollars for his appearance to answer the charge that had been brought against him.

The next game, of the opening series was played at the Berkley grounds.

The day before that game came off Bert Cliff again met Dan Kennard in the little saloon where we have seen him and the captain of the Berkley nine on a previous occasion.

In the last game Bert Cliff had redeemed himself in the eyes of all the Columbia champions.

So brilliant had been his play that even the captain, Bob Stanley, himself could but commend him.

The young baseball captain had never yet had much experience in sounding the depths of duplicity to which man may sink, and so he had now about concluded that, after all, he must have wronged Cliff.

"Well, Cliff, I don't know what to say to you about to-morrow's game," said Dan Kennard, as the two young athletes sat over their beer.

"Why? Have you not resolved on anything?"

"Not for sure."

"Why not?"

"Well, you see that Case affair has got noised about, and we are afraid we will lose all the sympathy and support of the public at large if we don't let up on our game to beat Columbia by stratagem."

"That's so. You want to be careful."

"I admit that. Now, while I can't instruct you to throw the game, you will make a bad play, an error, when you can safely do so in to-morrow's game."

"I understand. I am to make errors in such a way only that the champions' suspicions will not again be aroused against me."

"Just so. For, though, mind you, I don't say it will be so, there's just a bare possibility that the great pitcher and captain of the Columbias may not play in the game."

"What! You don't mean serious foul play against Bob Stanley? You don't mean to—"

"Never mind just what I mean. All you have to do to earn your money is to obey orders."

"That's so."

"Now, then, good-night. Keep your eyes open to-morrow, and don't forget what I have told you."

"I will not. Good-night."

After he had parted with Dan Kennard Bert Cliff said to himself:

"I wonder what is really in the wind now. Can it be that they would really dare to strike at Bob's life? I'm beginning to get sick of the part I am playing. I've got a pretty elastic conscience, but such vindictive, desperate work as I fear Dan Kennard now has in mind goes against me."

That night, at a late hour, there came a timid rap at the door of Bob Stanley's room in the academy boarding house.

The lad was alone.

He hastened to open the door.

There stood a ragged urchin with a letter in his hand.

"Fer you, mister," piped the little fellow in a shrill voice, thrusting the letter in Bob's hand and immediately scampering away.

Bob saw the letter was directed to himself.

The chirography was neat and of the feminine style.

With some curiosity, while he wondered what lady could have written to him, Bob opened the missive.

It was brief—a mere note. But its contents startled the boy.

He read the note several times.

It ran as follows:

"Mr. Robert Stanley—Dear Sir: You will receive a telegram by noon to-morrow purporting to come from the father of your absent friend, Tom Beverly, formerly captain of the Columbia nine, announcing that his son is dying and imploring you to hasten to his bedside. The telegram will be a forgery, concocted by your enemies to prevent your taking part in to-morrow's ball game. Yours sincerely,  
Leona."

"I will heed that message. Leona is friendly to me, it seems. But what did she mean by accepting Dan Kennard's escort, instead of mine?" reflected Bob.

The lad paced up and down his room for some time, thinking deeply.

Finally he said:

"I think I'll give Dan Kennard and his friends the greatest surprise of the season to-morrow."

Bob smiled to himself.

He thought he had hit upon an excellent plan to outwit his foes, and the idea pleased him.

When he fell asleep he was still thinking of his plan and Leona.

Bob mentally resolved that he would yet try to see and converse with the beautiful girl of the lone riverside cabin again. He felt grateful and secretly delighted at the deep interest she had manifested in his welfare by sending him that note.

Bob thought that he might yet persuade Leona to explain the mystery of the seeming authority the rascally Dan Kennard had ventured to exercise over her.

The next morning Bob called his three special confidants, tall Sam Heaton, "Snap" Cotter and Fred Dean into his room.

"Well, boys, I've got a letter to read you," announced Bob.

Then, when the door was locked, he produced the note he had received from Leona.

In low tones, for he was beginning to feel constantly suspicious of the presence of eavesdropping emissaries of his foes, Bob read the note to his friends.

They were surprised and indignant.

A consultation was held, and a neat trap was set for the sporting contingent of Berkley and Dan Kennard's confederates.

Towards noon, sure enough, just as Leona's message had warned him, Bob received a telegram signed by Tom Beverly's father, and bidding the boy baseball captain hasten, by first train, to Tom's death bed.

Bob assumed deep grief.

At once he made public the telegram.

Then he set about getting ready to catch the first train, and to the members of the Champion Club he said, in parting with them:

"I am very sorry I cannot play with you this afternoon. But I'll send you a substitute in my place. I know a colored boy down at Morrisville, and I'll see him and send him up in time to play with you. He is a pretty good player, but out of practice. Maybe he will do some good. Anyhow, it's the best I can do for you to send him."

Bert Cliff walked away when Bob had gone to the depot.

Reaching his room he hastily scribbled a note. It was for Dan Kennard.

The note stated that Bob had gone to the death-bed of Tom Beverly, and that a "nigger" who was only a poor country player was to take Bob's place in the game that afternoon. Cliff took the note to the little saloon where he met Kennard.

There he intrusted it to the proprietor's son, a shrewd urchin of twelve, to carry to Kennard, at the Berkley institution.

At three o'clock that afternoon the grandstand and adjacent benches on the ball grounds at Berkley Academy were thronged.

The game now about to be played was the "rub" of the series. The chances of the club winning it for the final championship in the academy would be great. The interest was corresponding.

But when the time set for the game came Bob's darky substitute had not arrived, and the champions were a man short. Here was a dilemma.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE DARKY BASEBALL PLAYER PROVES A SURPRISE.

Of course the champions could draw a man from the "second nine," or reserve players of the club.

But this they did not wish to do if they could help it, for to say the truth, there was only inferior material in the second nine.

It seemed, however, that someone of the second nine would have to play in the place of Bob Stanley's darky substitute.

Tall Sam Heaton was acting captain for the day, and he spoke to the umpire and asked for a few moments' delay in calling the game.

Sam appeared to think it likely the darky would yet come, and strange to say, though all the other members of the champion club seemed considerably exercised in the matter, Snap Cotter and Fred Dean also appeared to be of Sam's opinion.

When the latter asked for a delay Dan Kennard promptly objected.

While the captain of the rival club was addressing himself to the umpire in an arrogant, overbearing tone, a shout went up from the Columbia Academy boys.

Just then a darky youth, clad in the uniform of the Champions, was seen entering the park.

He came forward with a shuffling gait that was anything but alert or characteristic of an athlete, who moves with elasticity always.

The crowd in the grandstand and on the adjacent boards greeted Bob Stanley's darky substitute with a laugh.

"The coon can't run the bases, and if he can hit the ball it will only be when it is put down on the ground before him," sneered Dan Kennard.

The darky seemed in no way abashed, though he had to run a perfect gantlet of jibes and jeers as he passed along the benches to the bench of the Columbia boys.

As he went by the grandstand he took off his cap and bowed and scraped in a most awkward and laughable manner.

"A regular country darky. What in the world could have made Bob Stanley send him. It must be he's made a mistake in his man, or that coon has deceived him as to his ability as a ball player," said Bert Cliff.

There was a general murmur of dissatisfaction among the Columbia boys as the darky came up, and the Berkley nine laughed and geyed the poor colored youth.

"That coon will make us lose the game! Better put one of the worst of our second nine in his place," advised one of the Columbia boys, speaking to Sam Heaton.

"No. Bob sent him and he must play."

"Well, it's a shame, that's all. We'll be beaten two to one."

"I guess not. Come, don't make a kick," responded Heaton, and then he hastily whispered something in the ear of the dissatisfied player. The latter looked as if he had received the greatest surprise of his life, but he did not offer another word of objection to Bob Stanley's substitute.

Almost immediately the game was called.

Meantime, when Dan Kennard had—to use his own words—"sized up" Bob's colored substitute, he privately sent word around among the adherents and backers of the Berkley nine, assuring them that on account of "the nigger being no good" Berkley stood to win the game sure.

Dan Kennard's messenger, moreover, strongly advised his friends to buy Berkley in the pools for all they were worth.

The game opened with Columbia at the bat, for this time Berkley won the toss.

The first two Columbia batsmen were struck out.

Then "the nigger" went to the bat.

"Bang!" as the first hot, twisted ball came over the plate. Bob's substitute caressed it with the willow in a way that made it sing through the outer field, and sent the right-fielder chasing it to the fence.

"Whoop dar! Clar de track! I'se sent fur an' I'se got to go!" cried the grinning darky, and all of a sudden, as if by magic, he seemed to limber up in every joint, and the way he ran those bases and came in safe, making a clean home run,

is one of the traditions among the baseball boys of old Columbia Academy to this day.

The game throughout proved a wonderful surprise to everybody, unless it was Sam Heaton, Fred Dean and little Snap Cotter, the shortstop.

The latter was so delighted at the performance of the darky that he had to vent his joy by turning a series of flip-flops in the infield as the colored youth crossed the home plate all right.

The opening of the fourth inning saw the darky in the box.

"Do they think the coon can pitch too? I confess he was a surprise as a batter and runner, but I'll bet we can pound him out of the box in short order," said Dan Kennard.

But there was where he was wrong again.

The darky could certainly pitch baseball.

He quickly retired three men in quick succession. Then the fickle audience actually gave the colored youth a cheer.

But he paid no attention to them, well knowing if he had failed as a pitcher they would only have jeered him.

When at last the ninth inning was concluded the score stood:

Columbia 4.

Berkley 1.

Again victory had perched upon the banner of the champions.

Dan Kennard's friends were dumfounded. They had all lost money, and everybody seemed inclined to look upon the colored youth as a coming star in the baseball firmament.

Dan Kennard and the leading members of his club had a little talk on the ball grounds as the crowd was dispersing, at the conclusion of the exciting game.

"I mean to hire the nigger feller for our club. What do you say?" asked Dan.

There was a general assent.

"He will be a great addition to the strength of our batteries and at the bat," said one of the Berkleys.

"But his color?" remarked another.

"That doesn't matter. He will only be a hired player, but we'll have to get him entered as a student of Berkley, and keep it a secret that he is paid to play; otherwise, according to the league rule of the academy clubs, he will be barred out," continued Dan.

It was decided that the darky should be hired.

No one seemed to think he might object.

Presently Dan approached the colored youth as he was leaving the grounds and said:

"I'd like to talk with you on business. Our club would like to get you to play with us hereafter. Will you meet me at Smith's saloon at nine to-night?"

"Deed, yes," replied the darky.

"All right. See that you are there on time."

"Dat's all right."

Dan went on well satisfied that he would have no difficulty of engaging the colored youth for the Berkley Club at his own terms.

The darky grinned as if at some very good joke as soon as Dan's back was turned.

That evening before nine o'clock the colored youth entered Smith's saloon.

This is the place where we have twice seen Dan Kennard and Bert Cliff, the traitor to the Columbia Club, meet.

The darky called for a glass of ginger ale, and sat down at one of the tables to drink it.

Presently the door opened, and in came Dan Kennard.

But he did not come alone. With him was Bob Stanley's Nemesis—the swarthy secret foe who had been his shadow of ill omen for so long.

"Please slip into the rear room. There we will discuss the terms of your engagement with Berkley," said Dan to the col-

ored youth. Dan and the Frenchman passed into a little rear room, and the colored youth followed. The Frenchman closed the door and, as he placed his back to it, hissed in the darky's face:

"I know you. You are Bob Stanley in disguise."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### BOB CORNERED—A ROW AT SMITH'S.

"Jupiter! You don't mean it. It can't be! This darky isn't Bob Stanley. We haven't been duped again!" cried Dan Kennard, as the Frenchman uttered the startling words which were an astounding revelation for the Berkley captain.

He wheeled as he spoke, and stared at the colored youth.

It was a thrilling situation for Bob Stanley, for, of course, the keen-sighted Nemesis had at last hit upon the truth.

Yes, the pretended darky youth was really Bob Stanley, the captain of the Columbia nine, cleverly disguised.

This was the plan which we have hinted Bob had arranged for the discomfiture of his baseball rivals and his personal enemies.

He had taken tall Sam Heaton, Fred Dean and Snap Cotter into his confidence, and that statement will explain why the trio were so willing he should play in the great closing game of the first series, though his appearance at first had been so awkward and so little in accord with the ideal of a baseballist.

Bob enjoyed the fun he had as a darky baseball player, and he felt that for once at least he had paid back his enemies, as they deserved in their own coin.

When Dan Kennard invited Bob to meet him at the saloon where they now were, the lad had a definite object in agreeing to the tryst.

He thought it possible he might learn something of value regarding the plots and plans of his enemy.

The disguise had proven so impenetrable on the ball ground that Bob now had the utmost confidence in it.

He had no fear that Dan Kennard would penetrate the secret.

When the mysterious Nemesis uttered his thrilling words and Bob comprehended that his secret was out—that his most dreadful foe had penetrated it—his feeling may be imagined.

The exultant, blazing eyes of his fatal shadow seemed alight with the terrible lurid glare of murder. The fearful glance seemed to burn into Bob's brain as he met the fiery scintillations of those flaming orbs.

Bob leaped backward so that he brought a table between himself and his two enemies.

"Ha! we have him now," gritted the Nemesis.

Bob saw he was about to draw a weapon.

The lad acted with the promptitude of thought itself.

The only light in the room came from a small oil lamp standing upon the table behind which Bob had retreated.

Quick as a flash, the young baseball captain overturned the table.

It fell with a crash and the light was extinguished.

The Frenchman and Dan Kennard made a rush at, Bob, but they stumbled over the table and with one lofty bound the boy baseball captain cleared the obstacle and gained the door.

Dashing open the portal, he rushed out into the room beyond. A number of young fellows belonging to Berkley Academy were now in the apartment.

"Stop him! Stop him! Ze nigger has assaulted Dan Kennard!" shouted the Frenchman.

Bob was making for the street door as fast as possible. But as soon as they heard the cry of the Nemesis and recognized Bob as the darky who had played such a great game that day,

the Berkley boys sought to cut off the lad's escape from the barroom.

Four young fellows, who were playing billiards at the tables, at the side of the room, which were a part of the attractions of "Smith's," sprang to intercept Bob. "Hold on, nig. Hold on, I say!" cried the foremost of the Berkley quartette, as the four ranged themselves before Bob.

As he spoke the Berkley leader raised the billiard cue he had brought with him from the table, and made a motion as if he meant to strike Bob with it.

Dan Kennard and the Frenchman were coming from the rear room.

It looked as if the disguised boy baseball captain was in great danger of being hemmed in between two parties of foes.

But he was equal to the occasion.

Dodging quickly, he sprang forward, and, catching the up-raised billiard cue in his left hand, he hurled the fellow who held it out of his way.

Then on for the door, striking right and left as he went to get the other three Berkley fellows out of his way.

Bob would have gained the street door all right and probably made his escape from the place without further difficulty, but one of the Berkley men managed to trip him up.

Bob fell, and as he attempted to scramble up the four Berkley fellows threw themselves upon him.

"Fair play! One at a time, unless you are cowards!" shouted Bob, in ringing tones, as he struggled manfully.

It would have gone hard with him then, but his loud shout was heard in the street, and heard by friends, too.

It was the greatest piece of good fortune that could possibly have befallen Bob, for just then tall Sam Heaton, Fred Dean and Snap Cotter, the little shortstop of Columbia, chanced to be passing.

"Hello! By George, fellows! that's Bob's voice, and there's a row in Smith's. Come on!" cried Sam.

He dashed into the saloon as he spoke, and his two comrades followed.

They took in the whole scene at a glance and comprehended it. Kennard and the Frenchman were trying now to strike Bob while he struggled with the Berkley fellows who had thrown themselves upon him at the door.

"Columbia! Columbia! Give it to 'em!" cried tall Sam Heaton, who was by the way a great amateur boxer.

Then the way he and his two comrades of the champion baseball club sailed into the Berkley fellows was a sight to please the lovers of fair play.

Sam sent the Frenchman sprawling head first under a table before he realized what had hit him.

Fred Dean paid Dan Kennard the compliments of the season in the same way.

Little Snap Cotter landed a blow on the face of one of the Berkley fellows that might have counted as a basehit in a ball game.

Bob gained his feet, and seeing that the tables were completely turned, the Berkley crowd beat a retreat, the Frenchman going with them.

It wasn't often there was a fight between the students of the rival academies.

The police were pretty strict with the boys, and so were the faculties of the two institutions of learning, when it came to dealing with cases of fighting.

But the bad blood that existed between Columbia and Berkley would crop out occasionally in a row.

Bob knew now the feeling would be still more bitter the remainder of the year, and he doubted not the Berkley men who had fled would seek another chance to try the conclusions of fistieuffs with him and his friends.

It was necessary, of course, that Bob should explain the cause of the row to his three comrades.

As they set out for the academy he did so.

"By George!" exclaimed tall Sam Heaton when Bob concluded. "They had you in a tight place in that back room. If you had not had the presence of mind you then showed, it might have been all up with you. That Frenchman has the face of an assassin."

Bob realized that he had met with a narrow escape, but he hoped he would not be further troubled by the Nemesis. At least for a time.

Could he have penetrated the dark shadows in his rear—for now the darkness of night had completely fallen—Bob would have immediately changed his opinion. He would have seen that he was followed by the Frenchman.

The young baseball captain and his friends arrived at the academy boarding house in safety, and then Bob said to Sam Heaton:

"Won't you come up to my room. I want your help in an important matter?"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE MYSTERIOUS SECRET CIPHER.

Sam Heaton cheerfully assented to Bob's request, and the latter led the way to his room.

Bob's apartment was on the second floor, on a pleasant shady side of the building overlooking a neat lawn.

The roof of a porch was directly under his window, and so nearly on a level with it that Bob had utilized it as a sort of "window garden."

He had quite a number of beautiful flowering plants of which he took the greatest care in pots on the roof under his window.

The evening was warm, and as soon as he had entered his apartment, Bob opened the casement and lighted the gas.

Without the sky had become black and a storm threatened, making the external gloom complete and impenetrable.

Having lowered a wooden shade, composed of slats that folded upon each other when the shade was drawn up across the window, Bob locked the door and said:

"You know, I told you all the strange story of my life, Sam, and all about the Nemesis—the secret cipher given me by a dying man, and all the rest?"

"Yes."

"Very well. I am about to show you the cipher. I am fully convinced it contains a hidden revelation of the greatest importance."

"To you?"

"To me and to my foes."

"I think you are right, Bob."

"I am almost sure, Sam."

"Everything points that way, at least," Bob added, as he unlocked the trunk, and took out a small wooden box, with a sliding cover.

A student lamp burned on a table in the center of the room, which increased the light from the gas.

"Come, draw yourself up a chair, Sam. You'll need to sit down before we are through, I'm thinking, for I want you to help me read the cryptograms," said Bob.

He and his school friend became seated at the table at once.

Then Bob opened the box from the trunk, which he had placed upon the table.

It contained a package of letters and some loose papers. But at the bottom of the box, carefully wrapped up on a fold of oil silk, was the copy of the secret cipher which Bob wished to read.

He had made the copy from the original, which he now be-

lieved to be in the possession of the mysterious Frenchman long previously.

How he now congratulated himself that he had done so.

But for this forethought the paper which he did not doubt was really the clew to a great mystery, would have been forever lost to him.

"Here it is—the cipher which I have vainly tried to read a thousand times," said Bob, as he removed the oil skin cover and drew out a sheet of heavy parchment.

It was covered with rows of dots and figures, but there was not a single letter of the alphabet or other sign or symbol in the entire cryptogram.

"Letters might have given us some sort of a clew to work on, Sam. But this great jumble of dots and figures is a maze of most impenetrable mystery," said Bob, spreading out the paper upon the table before himself and his companion.

"I should say so. Without some kind of a starter—a key to the cipher—I don't see how we are to get to work."

"It's difficult to decide how to proceed."

"If you can't make anything of it, I'm sure you need not count anything on my assistance," said Sam, who justly enough had a very high opinion of his friend's mental ability.

"Two heads are always better than one."

"If one is a saphead," replied Sam, laughing.

"Well, now, seriously, Sam," began Bob, when the other interrupted him, saying:

"Just wait until I light my pipe and get my thinking cap on."

Bob did not say another word until Sam was puffing away, like a steam engine, at a huge pipe, with an expression of supreme contentment, which the man who does not love the delightful weed must forever remain ignorant of.

"Well, I've got steam up, so go ahead as soon as you like. But mind you, I don't mean to suggest that I can run my mental engine to a solution of that cipher," remarked Sam at length.

"I've recently purchased a book, treating on ciphers and solutions. Here is the volume. I haven't much time to devote to its study as yet, but it may be of assistance to us now," said Bob.

He had taken a small bound volume from a book rack, in the center of the table, while speaking.

Bob opened the book, and assisted by Sam began to look through it.

The two lads sought for some examples of the various forms of cryptograms, which had been invented by ingenious mortals, that might be similar to the one they wished to solve.

The specimens of cipher were numerous, and the two lads had looked the work pretty well through before they came to anything like the cipher Bob had received from the dying man who had been in the service of his rascally uncle, the father of Dan Kennard.

"Hello! This looks something like it!" at last exclaimed Bob, as he turned a page very near the end of the volume.

"That's so."

"Nothing but figures and dots in this one."

"Almost the same idea as the cipher we want to get at it seems at the first glance."

"Yes. Let's see what the explanation of or the key to this printed cipher is."

Bob began to read the foot note. It was the key to the cipher of figures and dots.

In a few moments the two intelligent lads had mastered the explanation. Then Bob said, in tones of repressed excitement:

"I am almost tempted to exclaim 'Eureka.'"

"Don't be too quick! Maybe we are not out of the woods yet. Let's try the rule for reading the cipher in the book on

the one you have in parchment before we shout we have found it."

"All right. But I'm pretty well excited I can tell you, and some way I feel I am on the eve of a thrilling experience of some sort."

"A great discovery, let us hope."

Bob read aloud from the book as follows:

"The above example of the figures and dots cipher is one of the most simple systems of cryptogramic writing, and yet one of the most difficult to read. It all depends on one thing—knowing the book that is the key. In this system the first number indicates the page of some book, and is inclosed in brackets. The next number is separated from the first by a dot, and it indicates a word on the page whose number is first given. The words are to be counted from the top of the page as one—two—three—twenty and the like. The first word used in the cipher may be the fiftieth one on the page, or any other. When a new page is used its number is inclosed in a bracket and so on. Once the title of the book upon which the cipher is found is known the rest is so easy that following the above instructions a child may read it."

Having finished reading the direction of the book, for the second time, Bob scanned his copy of the mysterious cryptogram.

The first number was inclosed in a bracket. The other numbers, until a dozen or more, were separated by dots. Then came another number in brackets.

"This is surely a 'book cipher,' as the little cryptogram volume calls it. We have found out its secret. But yet we are baffled, until we know the title of the book, from which it is written," said Bob in tones of conviction.

"It will be just like looking for a needle in a hay stack to hunt for the right book," replied Sam, rather discouragingly.

"And yet sooner or later I will read the cipher if I live," replied Bob as if he was uttering a vow.

"Never!" said a dark faced man beyond the window under his breath.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE MIDNIGHT SPY—AT THE PISTOL'S POINT.

All the books in Bob Stanley's room were opened by the lads seeking for the volume upon which the secret cipher was founded.

But their labor was vain.

They did not find the volume they wished.

One might search through the largest library in the land and yet fail in such a task as the two boys had undertaken.

It was growing late when Bob and Sam Heaton had concluded experimenting with the last volume of Bob's limited collection.

Sam had kept his pipe going pretty much all the time, but even that source of pleasant mental stimulation had at length failed.

Sam yawned, put down his pipe, stretched his long limbs, and said, fervently, as Bob closed the last book with a disappointed sigh:

"Thank the Lord there are no more of them. Good-night, old chap. I'm off for bed."

"Good-night, Sam, and I am much obliged to you, I'm sure."

"Not at all. I'll help you any time. I suppose we shall have to work through the whole Academy library."

"Perhaps; and yet we may stumble on what we want early in the quest."

"By a lucky accident? By George, I should not wonder if it would turn out so. You are a lucky fellow, taking all things

into consideration. I am coming to believe in your luck. Good-night again."

The door closed behind Sam Heaton as he last spoke, and Bob was alone.

He turned the key in the closed door, and then went back to the table and began to gather up and re-arrange his books. Some time elapsed.

The sounds of Sam Heaton's footsteps had died away down the deserted hall.

The clock on the mantel in Bob's room chimed the hour of twelve.

"I didn't think it was quite as late as that. I must lock up the precious secret cipher and get to bed, for I want to be up betimes in the morning," muttered Bob.

He stood with his back to the window.

Unseen, unheard, a dangerous presence then became visible there.

A human hand had noiselessly raised the slat curtain the preceding moment, while Bob's back was turned.

Now the head and shoulders of the mysterious Frenchman—the Nemesis, who was the fatal shadow of the boy baseball captain—appeared in the open space.

He glared into the room.

His thin, cruel lips were parted, showing his white teeth. His eyes flashed. His whole expression was wolfish, eager, determined.

From the boy, whom he so ruthlessly hunted, the evil glance of the midnight spy traveled to the box in which Bob had now replaced the secret cipher.

The purpose of the spy was evident.

He meant to rob Bob of the copy of the cipher.

Possibly, too, the mysterious man of evil might attempt then and there to deal the fatal blow that would forever remove Bob Stanley from the pathway of his enemies.

Bob stood motionless at the table for some moments, as if he had all at once fallen into a reverie.

His hands trifled aimlessly, as it seemed, with the table cover, and yet what was the meaning of the strange expression that all at once appeared upon his face.

Bob had suddenly grown pale.

Then a sudden gleam of desperate resolution had flashed into his eyes.

He looked like one, who, upon the instant, had formed some great and all-important purpose.

But, as we have said, his back was to the window. Could he be aware of the presence of the dangerous foe who was crouching there?

It did not seem possible—and yet what else could explain the intense and thrilling expression of his countenance, which was hidden from the Frenchman by his position.

Slowly, noiselessly, with the stealthiness of a cat, the Nemesis drew himself forward.

Almost holding his breath, for fear of alarming the boy he meant to surprise, he drew himself further into the room, inch by inch.

Still motionless stood Bob.

On through the window the tall form of the swarthy villain came, until his full length had passed the casement, and he stood erect upon the heavily carpeted floor silent as a shadow.

The Nemesis seemed to measure the distance between himself and Bob.

One leap and he could reach the boy.

Suddenly the Frenchman put his hand behind him, and the succeeding instant a dagger appeared in his hand.

Then as he was about to make a sudden advance upon the boy baseball captain, Bob wheeled like a flash.

He raised his right hand from under the table cover as he turned. In it he clutched the revolver that had been the gift of Leona.

The Frenchman reeled back as the deadly tube was leveled full at his breast.

"Drop that knife or I will shoot you down in your tracks," commanded Bob, sternly, with his finger on the trigger of the weapon.

The Frenchman hesitated.

"Quick!" the sharp tone of the boy conveyed his fierce determination.

The Nemesis feared to disobey the order longer, and so he flung the dagger upon the floor. It dropped almost at Bob's feet. With one fierce kick he sent the murderous blade into a distant corner.

Still keeping his weapon leveled, Bob said sternly, commandingly:

"Sit down."

The Frenchman muttered something in his native language, but he dropped into a chair.

"You came here to rob—to murder me," continued the young baseball captain.

The Frenchman did not reply.

"Time and time again you have placed my life in deadly peril."

Still the Nemesis was silent.

"Why should I not kill you?"

The villain shrugged his shoulders.

But now Bob saw a sudden expression of new alarm flash into his evil eyes.

"Yes, I repeat. Why should I not kill you? Certainly I should be justified in doing so. But I want you to answer some questions."

"What are they?"

The Frenchman had found his tongue at last.

"First, who set you on my trail?"

"I cannot tell."

"You must; you shall."

"Does ze young monsieur think zat I am a fool—that he can so easily me intimidate? Non! Non! Ze Frenchman is no coward!"

"You evidently seek to obtain the copy of the cipher—the original of which you stole from me at the riverside hotel, where your cowardly shot so nearly cost me my life. You know the secret of that cipher."

The Frenchman shook his head negatively.

"I know better. Now, then, hear my ultimatum. You shall tell me how to read the cipher—make known its contents to me, or I will hand you over to the police to be tried for attempt at murder."

The Frenchman paled a trifle.

He shifted uneasily in his chair, and then asked:

"Suppose zat I obey ze young monsieur?"

"Then I will allow you to depart as you came."

For a moment the Frenchman hesitated, and then he said, with an air of decision:

"You hold ze game in your own hand. I accept your terms. Listen, and I will tell you all the great secret of the cipher."

Bob listened with breathless interest as the Frenchman went on.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A DARING ROBBERY—LEONA'S MESSENGER AGAIN.

"Ze fact is, young monsieur, ze cipher relates to a mystery of years ago. Zat all may be plain I must make ze return to ze date of ze events to which ze cipher refers," continued the Frenchman.

Was he talking to gain time?

It might have struck any one so, who was less deeply interested than Bob.

But the young baseball captain, to whom the revelation of the cipher secret might mean so much, never thought that his mysterious Nemesis was speaking with intentional circumlocution.

As he paused, Bob said eagerly:

"Go on, go on!"

It was in his mind then that surely the secret of the cipher related to the mystery of the robbery of his grandfather's bank, and the secret as to who was the real thief was to be revealed.

Bob had detected the presence of the Frenchman by means of a small mirror placed on the wall directly opposite the window.

In a little glass the lad had seen the reflection of the midnight spy, while yet his back was turned to the window.

But now Bob neither looked at the glass on the wall nor at the window.

His eyes were fixed upon the face of the Frenchman, as if he hoped to divine, from the expression of the rascal's countenance, whether the explanation he was about to make was true or false.

If Bob's entire attention had not been so completely bestowed upon the villain before him, he might have become aware of something startling, that was taking place at the window.

Just as Bob demanded that the villain should reveal the secret of the cipher, another face appeared at the window, and another pair of evil eyes looked into the room.

The last secret arrival was Dan Kennard.

When the Frenchman tracked the young baseball captain from the neighborhood of Smith's saloon, earlier that evening, Bob's rascally cousin had followed the Nemesis.

It had been agreed between them this should be so.

The Frenchman had gained the roof of the porch under Bob's window by climbing one of the vine-grown pillars which supported it.

He had then signaled silently to Dan to follow. It was their purpose to make sure if a copy of the mysterious cipher was in Bob's possession. And, perhaps, in their secret hearts, they had a still more deadly purpose.

Dan Kennard had gained the roof of the porch just as the Frenchman, momentarily cowed by the sight of the deadly tube Bob had turned upon him, threw down his dagger.

Crouching behind the slat screen, which had been silently dropped to its place by the Nemesis when he entered, Dan had heard all.

Then he had shown his face.

Seeing him, the Frenchman made up his mind to yet attempt to make Bob Stanley the victim of a ruse.

He was merely talking to gain time.

The rascal had not the least intention of revealing to Bob the real secret of his mysterious cipher.

He meant to hold the attention of the young baseball captain until Dan Kennard could crawl serpent-like into the room.

The Nemesis believed that Dan would suddenly leap upon Bob from the rear and hurl him to the floor.

Then the villain considered it certain that he and his confederate would be able to snatch victory from defeat.

"Ze truth is zat ze cipher is——" began the Frenchman again.

But suddenly he paused.

Dan was inside the room now, and at that instant he leaped upon the boy baseball captain from the rear.

Bob had, of course, neither seen nor heard him.

The lad was taken completely by surprise.

Bob was hurled upon the floor.

"Help! help! help!" he shouted, as the Frenchman and Dan both hurled themselves upon him.

The Nemesis clutched the young baseball captain by the throat and began to strangle him.

At the same time the villain said to Dan:

"Secure the little wooden box on the table. The cipher is in it. Make off with the box. Leave the boy to me."

Dan sprang to the table and caught up the box.

Bob Stanley struggled desperately as he thought that upon his efforts now alone depended his ability to retain possession of the only clew to the mystery of the past in which he was so deeply interested.

But the great muscular hand of the Nemesis tightened on his throat.

The fatal shadow not only prevented Bob making any further outcry, but also shut off his breath.

Bob felt that he was being strangled. It was a terrible sensation. It seemed to the poor fellow that all the blood of his entire body was surging to his brain in a fierce tide that threatened to burst his skull asunder.

His eyes were starting from their sockets, but he could not see.

There was a strange blur before his vision, and a sound like the buzz of many wheels rang in his ears. Then all at once a crash.

Suddenly the senses of suffocation passed away, and Bob could see again also.

The door of his room stood open.

The frail lock hung shattered from a single screw.

Before him stood Sam Heaton and Fred Dean.

The window was open. The slat blind lay a heap of ruin on an overturned chair. The table cloth, lamp, and a dozen books were on the floor. The room looked as if it had been the scene of an exciting struggle.

"The box! The box containing the secret cipher!" cried Bob, as he saw it had disappeared.

"The scoundrels got away with it. We came too late to save it," said Heaton.

"But not too late to save you, thank heaven, Bob. The dark-faced man had you by the throat. He was strangling you to death. We fell upon him, but he tore away and dashed through the window," added Dean.

"You saw but one person here with me?" asked Bob.

"Only one," replied Sam Heaton. "And he was the Frenchman."

"Then the other had fled with the box containing the cipher before you arrived."

"I suppose so, if there was another person here."

"How did you come here in time to save me?"

"I heard you shout. I chanced to be in the hall. The truth is, Fred and I were going to his room to partake of some of the contents of that last box he got from home," replied Sam, who had been tempted not to go to bed.

"And you can bet we got here pretty lively after we heard you call," said Dean.

"You will excuse us for not waiting for you to open the door, and if you insist upon it we will pay for the lock we broke in forcing our way in," Sam went on facetiously.

"You can't tell how grateful I am to you, boys. But this night's adventures have ended with a terrible experience. I have been robbed of the only clew to the great mystery of the past. Can you guess who the Frenchman's comrade was?" said Bob.

"Was he Kennard?" exclaimed Sam.

"Yes."

"He is even more of a rascal than I thought."

Bob bowed his head in his hands and was silent for a long time. He felt that the enemy had dealt him a blow in stealing the cipher from which he could not recover. At length his friends left him.

Bob did not close his eyes that night to sleep.

Just at dawn a tap sounded on his door, and upon opening it, to his surprise he saw the very lad who had brought him Leona's note.

## CHAPTER XX.

## A "GOOD FAIRY" SENDS BOB A GIFT.

Bob was very much more surprised than he had been at the first sight of the boy when, a moment subsequently, he drew a package from under his ragged jacket, and holding it out, said: "For you."

Bob took the package.

Then, as before, the boy immediately took to his heels.

The young baseball captain felt his heart beat fast as he removed the wrapper that enclosed the package.

The next moment he uttered a glad cry.

He saw revealed the very box that had been carried off by Dan Kennard the preceding night.

"Bravo, bravo!" cried the delighted boy.

But just then he noted a little slip of white paper that had fallen to the floor with the wrapper of the box.

He picked it up.

In a moment he saw it was a note.

And he recognized the writing.

It was the chirography of Leona, the beautiful girl of the riverside cabin, who had so completely enthralled his heart and fancy.

Eagerly Bob read the letter from the fair girl, whom he suspected was environed by the meshes of some mystery, perhaps as deep as that which related to the secret cipher.

The note ran as follows:

"Robert Stanley—Dear Friend: I send you back the box which your foes stole from you, and in it you will find the secret cipher, which they fear you may read.

"I have listened to their talk, and I know that the cipher contains some information of the greatest importance to you.

"You should seek to read it. Perhaps I may yet learn the key to it from your enemies. Should I do so, I will hasten to communicate with you.

"The villains think the box and the copy of the cipher have been burnt up. At their request I pretended to cast it into the flames of our cabin fire.

"Secretly I have saved it for you, my dear friend. Leona."

"Brave, noble girl!" exclaimed Bob.

Then he open the box.

Therein he found the cipher.

Leona had not deceived him.

How great was Bob Stanley's joy at that moment we cannot adequately depict. Let it suffice for us to say that it was one of the most joyful moments of his whole life.

It had always been the hope and ambition of Bob's life that he might clear the good name of his dead father yet by proving that he was innocent of the bank robbery of which he had been accused.

Of course, in the reading of the cipher Bob hoped he would find the statement of the truth, as already hinted.

"Bravo, noble Leona! I knew she was good and true," continued Bob.

"It must be that I was right in thinking Dan Kennard exercised some secret power to compel her to accept his escort instead of mine at the ball ground," he reflected.

The lad resolved that in the future he would guard the cipher more carefully even than he had done in the past.

He set about making a hiding place for it in his room that very hour.

Bob had just got the box containing the cipher safely stowed away where he thought no one would dream of searching for it, when his three friends, Heaton, Dean and Snap Cotter, came in.

Of course Bob told them all about the wonderful return of the lost cipher.

He was duly congratulated, and then, as the breakfast bell rang, all the boys trooped down to the great dining hall.

The next series of the academy league games of baseball in which Columbia took part was with the Hemstead Academy nine.

The champions won two games out of three.

After that, for several weeks, the Columbia nine played with all the different clubs belonging to the Academy league.

At the same time the champion's rivals—the Berkley nine—were playing their regular scheduled games with the Academy clubs also.

At the end of eight weeks the Columbias and the Berkleys stood at the head of the list of all the Academy nines, in the number of games won.

The actual score was:

Columbia—Games won, 19. Games played, 24.

Berkley—Games won, 17. Games played, 24.

Certainly the rival clubs were crowding each other close in the race for the pennant.

The excitement still kept up.

The public scarcely knew which nine to pin their faith on.

But the slight lead of two games which the champions managed to hold helped to yet make them rather the favorites.

Bob Stanley had done noble work on the diamond all the time.

In several instances the Berkley nine had been guilty of shameful trickery, and more than once the evil hands of the Nemesis had been secretly lifted against Bob.

But a kind providence had watched over him and protected him.

He had safely passed all the pitfalls his foes had dug for him, and as if he bore a charmed life, he had eluded the secret blows of his deadly foes.

Since they had last met on the ball ground, weeks previously, Bob and Leona, the beautiful girl of the lone cabin, had not seen each other.

Once Bob, in his anxiety to see the young girl who had assumed toward him the part of a good fairy, went stealthily to the lone cabin.

It seemed silent and deserted.

After watching near it for some time, he ventured to the door. It was locked. No one responded to his rap, and at last he went away, fearing that he might never again see fair Leona, or learn what her fate had been.

But he reflected upon the confidential information of the man called "Baker," whose life he had saved at the lone cabin.

Then he began to think that the former inmates had not left the cabin no more to return, or he should have heard of it.

Bob had, thereafter, the hope to cheer him, that he might still have an opportunity to repay Leona for all she had done in his behalf, and to prove his devotion to her.

Though he had taken such an active part in baseball matters, Bob had not neglected his studies.

He knew he had his own way to make in the world, and he was ambitious to obtain a good education, knowing it would help him on the road to future success.

Just six weeks after Bob had made the secret visit to the lone riverside cabin, which we have just mentioned, one dark night he made up his mind to go there again.

Some way his solicitude on account of Leona resistlessly impelled him to the venture.

He knew that he might be venturing into deadly peril, still he would go on.

Night had completely fallen, for a couple of hours, when Bob left the academy alone.

A swift walk of a few minutes brought him to the river bank.

There he found Tom Beverly's boat. The invalid had left it for Bob's use, when he was forced to go home for the season.

Bob entered the boat and rowed away on the dark river, meaning to see the girl of the lone cabin if she was yet an inmate of it.

The rain began to fall presently.

Bob drew the waterproof coat he wore closely about his throat, and rowed on.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### BOB VISITS THE LONE CABIN—DEADLY PERIL AGAIN.

Bob rowed steadily on until he arrived near the lone cabin.

Then he dipped his oars cautiously.

Presently he made a landing, and having secured his boat, he advanced in the direction of the lone cabin.

Bob saw a light in the window.

Stealthily he drew nearer.

Soon he was under the window whence the light he had seen emanated.

Bob cautiously lifted his head above the sill.

He could then command a good view of the interior of the cabin.

What he saw startled him.

Three men were seated at a small table. One was the man of the cabin, Brad Gardelli; another was the Frenchman—the boy's Nemesis. The third man Bob did not know.

The Frenchman was holding up a paper upon which a diagram was drawn.

The keen-sighted young athlete, who was playing the spy at the window, caught the following inscription written on the paper:

"Plan of Prof. Walsingham's residence."

Bob was startled by the inscription.

What could it mean? What could these men be doing with a plan of the house of the principal of Columbia Academy.

Bob was puzzled.

But he was sure the rascals were up to some villainy.

He resolved to continue to watch and listen with the hope that he might learn something worth finding out.

Bob presently heard the Frenchman say:

"Yes, in ze character of a man sent to inspect the plumbing I got inside ze old book-worm's house and made ze plan."

"Guided by it we can do the job all right," said Gardelli.

"No doubt. I've marked the study where ze old man keeps ze largent—ze money—in ze safe."

"An easy crib to crack."

"Oh, yes, mon amie."

"Well, I'll bring out the tools."

"Yes, zat is best," said the Frenchman.

"Of course; for we must see they are all in order before we start out."

Gardelli passed out of the room.

He entered the interior apartment.

In a moment he reappeared, and in his hands he carried the little chest Bob had seen open there, and regarding the contents of which he had felt some curiosity, as it seemed full of strange tools.

Gardelli placed the chest on the table.

Then he opened it.

"There's as fine a kit of tools as any 'fly man' in the country owns," he said, proudly.

"Zat is no doubt ze truth," the Frenchman said.

Then Gardelli began to take out the singular instruments the box contained.

One by one they were critically inspected by the man of the lone cabin and his two comrades.

Each implement was carefully oiled when it had been pronounced all right.

Then it was laid on the table.

When the entire contents of the chest had thus passed through the hands of the trio all the implements were put in a leather bag.

Meanwhile, as may be supposed, the three men had not been silent.

On the contrary they had conversed almost constantly.

From what they said Bob gained some information of a surprising and alarming nature.

It appeared that having learned that Professor Walsingham had sold some property for cash a day or two before, and that he had not banked the money, they concluded it was in his safe.

That very night the villains meant to enter the residence of the principal of Columbia Academy as burglars, force open his safe by means of the tools taken from the chest, and rob the old gentleman of all the money his strong box might be found to contain.

Bob Stanley was intensely excited when he had learned all this.

The night favored the enterprise of the burglars, and Bob knew that, having little fear of robbers in that great town, the academy principal had his house but indifferently guarded.

The brave boy comprehended that, in all probability, it now devolved upon him alone to defeat the burglars.

He knew that he must steal away from the lone cabin undetected.

He must also get back to town as soon as possible and warn Professor Walsingham before the burglars could possibly make the attempt at robbery.

Bob crept away from the window.

He immediately set out for the river.

But he had not gone far when a hand suddenly fell upon his shoulder.

A thrill of alarm went through his nerves and he sprang away.

In the darkness he could see no one.

But he dreaded a foe.

The next instant his fears were dispelled.

A sweet and musical voice spoke to him in low tones from out of the darkness.

The voice he recognized. It told him the speaker was Leona.

"Fear not. I am a friend. I saw you at the cabin window by the light that came from the inside as I was approaching," said the young girl.

"Oh, Leona, how glad I am to meet you. Let me tell you how grateful I am to you for all you have done for me!" cried Bob, and in the darkness he took Leona's hand.

"I came to seek you here, for I feared some harm might have befallen you. But I have made a terrible discovery," he added.

"Oh!" the girl replied. "You know they mean to undertake a great robbery to-night?"

"Yes."

"You overheard them plotting it?"

"I did."

"Then hasten to warn the man they would rob."

"I meant to do so. But one moment. Before we part tell me when and where we can meet again."

"That I know not. But that we may meet again I sincerely hope."

"And I. Oh, Leona——"

But what Bob was about to say was cut short.

At that instant there was a crash in the bushes beside the young couple. The light of a dark lantern was flashed upon them, and they saw the three men upon whom Bob had spied at the lone cabin.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### BAFFLING THE BURGLARS.

By the merest accident alone had the discovery of Bob Stanley and Leona been brought about. The three men, upon whom the young baseball captain had been spying at the lone cabin, had left it almost immediately after Bob had taken his stealthy departure.

The sodden soil and rain-wet turf gave forth no sound under their footsteps, and as if treading a pathway of velvet, they went on and on, until all at once, they heard the murmur of voices.

Then, as though in obedience to the volition of a single intellect, they halted.

"What can this mean? Are spies again about? I thought they had given up the game to gather real proof against us," uttered Gardelli, in a whisper.

"We must know for a surety the character of the persons who are prowling so near the cabin in the darkness," he added. "Zat is so. We shall steal forward. We shall learn who za are!" said the Frenchman.

Gardelli carried the leather bag in which Bob had seen the burglars' tools placed, for the trio had really set out upon their expedition of robbery.

He handed the bag to the member of the party whose name Bob had not yet learned, and drew a dark lantern from his pocket.

"Now zen. we go on," then said the Frenchman.

The three men crept forward in the direction whence the murmur of voices emanated.

Presently they recognized the tones of Bob and Leona. The Frenchman was the first to thus detect the identity of the young baseball captain, and Gardelli of course recognized the voice of Leona as soon as he had approached near enough to distinctly hear what she said.

Then it was the villains made a rush upon the young couple as narrated.

The moment they darted forward Gardelli had sprung the mask of the dark lantern, which, until then, he had kept closed.

"Away! away for your life! I shall not be harmed!" cried Leona.

Bob made a leap.

The Frenchman barred his way.

But the clinched fist of the young athlete shot out like lightning.

He struck the Nemesis full in the face.

The blow came with lightning-like speed and tremendous force.

The Frenchman went down, all in a heap, under the blow of the young baseball captain.

Bob bounded over him.

As he darted away Gardelli and the other man bounded in pursuit.

But Bob's training as a base runner was now of the greatest service to him.

He seemed fairly to fly over the ground. Once he fell, but he regained his footing instantly, and was unharmed.

Bob shaped his course, through the intense darkness, in the direction of the river.

He soon reached the bank of the stream, and went swiftly along until he reached the place where he had left his boat.

Entering the little craft, Bob pulled away.

His return to the academy was accomplished in safety.

The hour was now late. But for all that, Bob proceeded to the residence of the principal of the academy without delay.

Having gained admission, Bob secured an audience with Professor Walsingham.

The lad briefly related how he had made the startling discovery that there was a plot on foot to rob the old gentleman.

The man of letters was quite alarmed, and after highly commending Bob for the courage which he had displayed, and thanking him for the news he had brought, he sent a message to the police.

Several officers soon reported.

They were made acquainted with the facts of the case, and a plan was suggested by Bob to capture the rascals if they came to the mansion.

The officers fell in with Bob's plan at once, and the young baseball captain directed that they should conceal themselves in the shrubbery in various parts of the grounds.

This was done.

Bob thought that perhaps the discovery of his presence near the lone cabin by the burglars might cause them to give up the plan to rob the principal's house.

But as the youth believed the rascals did not know that he had discovered their plans for the robbery, he still thought it possible the three desperate men might come.

Bob had taken his position in the rear of the house near a little gate in the wall of the spacious inclosure.

A clump of bushes concealed him. He was not kept long in a condition of suspense regarding the burglars.

In a short time he caught the sharp "click" of the gate latch.

The next moment, peering through the leafy canopy which concealed him, he saw a shadowy form glide through the portal.

Within half an hour the dark rain clouds that had enshrouded the sky, and placed the earth in gloomy shadows, had become less dense, and now objects could be discerned by keen eyes at a short distance.

Scarcely had the first shadowy form glided by the hiding place of the young baseballist, when another appeared.

Close behind the second night prowler came a third, and Bob felt convinced that the desperate trio from the lone cabin had all arrived.

It was an exciting moment.

It had been agreed between Bob and the police that the person who first discovered the burglars was to give the alarm.

The signal of discovery was to be a shrill whistle.

Instantly Bob glided after the last of the shadowy trio.

But he did not immediately give the signal.

He wanted the rascals to get close to the house, so that they would have further to go to get clear of the ground, if it came to a race between them and the police.

But in a moment or so Bob decided that he had better not longer delay in sounding the alarm.

Placing his fingers to his mouth, he sent forth a shrill whistle.

But as he was in the very act of so doing a form sprang out from behind the trunk of a tree in his rear and dealt him a blow on the head with a clubbed revolver.

Bob dropped all in a heap, stricken senseless by the cowardly blow, and the man who had struck him down cried out:

"Zis way! Sacre! we have walked into one trap."

The Frenchman darted away as he spoke. The other two men were a short distance ahead.

But they heard the shrill whistle Bob had sounded, and the words of their comrade reached them.

Instantly they followed him.

And the police officers came dashing from their several hiding places in the direction whence the sound of the whistle had emanated.

But the three burglars had obtained an excellent start. They got clear of the grounds and disappeared in the gloom before a single one of the bluecoats had passed the rear portal.

The officers scattered, and sought for the burglars beyond the yard. Failing to overtake them, they returned for instructions to headquarters.

Meanwhile Bob had not been discovered by the police.

He lay where he had fallen until the forces of nature rallied and his strong vitality brought him back to consciousness. Bob suspected the burglars had escaped when he found himself alone. Entering the mansion, he learned it was so.

A little later word came from the chief of the town police asking Bob to guide them to the lone cabin, for he had mentioned it as the retreat of the burglars while conversing with the officers.

Bob guided the police to the cabin, but no one was found there; Leona and the desperadoes had evidently fled. The police and Bob came back to town before dawn.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

ENDED.

Monotony in the school life at Columbia Academy was not broken by the occurrence of anything out of the way for some time.

Several more ball games were played during the ensuing weeks.

But still the champions of whom Bob was the captain held a slight lead in the race for the pennant.

The spy of Dan Kennard—Bert Cliff—still remained a member of the Columbia Club, and he had played a fair game since the episode which so nearly cost his expulsion from the nine.

True, on several occasions he had made intentional errors, acting on the instructions of Dan Kennard.

Bert Cliff was exceedingly cunning in his treacherous work.

The traitor took good care that his errors were made in such a way that no one would think they were purposely made.

Bob was deceived, for Bert Cliff was occasionally allowed by Dan Kennard to play a perfect game for Columbia, and when he wanted to do so the traitor could make an excellent showing on the diamond.

The crafty captain of the Berkley nine had a deep scheme in mind.

It was for that reason that he wished to have Bert Cliff retained by Columbia until it came to the "home stretch" in the race for the pennant.

At length the lapse of weeks brought the fall season around. Then, as the concluding games in the great Academy league were played, the interest and excitement of all concerned became more intense than ever.

Finally it came about that, when Columbia and Berkley were to play against each other the last three games of the season, Columbia still held the lead by just three games, with Berkley next.

It was close work.

The race for the pennant had now to be fought out between Berkley and Columbia. The other clubs were out of the "running."

The first game of the three that were to decide the championship was played on the Berkley grounds.

A vast audience—by far the largest of the season—assem-

bled to witness the game, which proved to be an exciting one. The Berkley nine won, however, by one run.

Columbia's lead in the championship race was then reduced to two games.

The next game was played on Columbia's grounds, and through a fielding error of Bert Cliff's, and his poor work at the bat, Columbia lost again.

Never had the race for the championship been so close before in the whole history of the academy league.

Only one game remained to be played to decide which of the rival nines should carry off the pennant.

Berkley had now only to win the next game to tie the champions. If she did that another game to settle the championship was to be played.

It was a time of feverish excitement and suspense for each of the rival clubs.

Bob blamed Bert Cliff for the loss of the last game. But the traitor had managed so cunningly that he really seemed to be doing his best when he made the error that lost Columbia the game.

As soon as it was over Bert Cliff burst into tears before all the members of his nine.

He seemed to feel the defeat of Columbia as bitterly as any one, and he kept repeating:

"It was all my fault. Somehow I got excited and lost my head for once. It's too bad—too bad. I'd give all I have in the world for a chance to play the game over again!"

But the chance was not to be had, and so he was quite safe in that speech.

Cliff played his part so well that his fellow players felt sorry for him.

Bob was so sympathetic of nature that he could not feel it in his heart to chide Cliff much.

The night of the day which witnessed the second defeat Columbia had received from the Berkleys, Bob found it impossible to sleep. He was too anxious, too tired, too much worried.

As he lay tossing on his couch, thinking, thinking, while he strove vainly to banish thought, and woo the drowsy god, Bob wondered where Leona was and if he should ever meet her again.

Of course the fear of arrest had made her father a fugitive, and evidently the poor girl had been compelled to share the flight of her unworthy sire.

Bob was supremely anxious on Leona's account, for he began to acknowledge to himself that she had become the bright star of all his hopes—the one whom he felt he could toil for, live for, die for.

The bright sunlight came in through the casement and caressed the chestnut curls of the boy as he lay yet sleepless, thinking of Leona and the final game of the baseball season.

All at once Bob was startled from a reverie into which he had fallen.

There came a rap at his door.

He sprang up, threw on a dressing robe, and opened the door.

Then for the third time he saw the ragged urchin who was Leona's messenger.

A glad cry of joyful anticipation fell from the lips of the lad as he saw the boy held a letter in his grimy hand.

Bob almost snatched it from him.

In a moment he had mastered its contents, and when he looked up again the boy had disappeared.

The note was from Leona.

It ran thus:

"Dear Friend—Beware of Bert Cliff. I have overheard Dan Kennard and the Frenchman talking, and Kennard says Cliff

is in his pay, and that he will surely make Columbia lose the last game of the season. Leona."

"Good gracious! Can it be that I've been duped ever since my first suspicions of Cliff were lulled?" exclaimed Bob.

"It must be so—I can rely on Leona. I'll watch Mr. Bert Cliff and play now to beat Dan Kennard at his own game," he added.

The last game of the season was to be played two days later.

That evening Bob left the campus just at dusk.

Half an hour later he was in hiding near Smith's saloon, which he had discovered Cliff frequently visited, ostensibly to play billiards.

In a short time Cliff came by and entered the saloon. But a few moments subsequently Bob saw Dan Kennard also enter the resort. Then he went along an alley and reached the rear of the saloon. He gained a small window that opened to the little room in the rear of the bar, which we have already mentioned. Looking through the window Bob saw Cliff and Dan Kennard conversing at a table. Bob listened. The window had been raised. He heard every word Cliff and Kennard spoke.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two hours later Bert Cliff was alone in his own room. Suddenly there came a tap at the door.

"Come in," invited Cliff, and the door opened and in walked Bob, saying, quietly:

"Your sins have found you out at last."

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### THE LAST GAME OF THE SEASON.

On the following day Bob Stanley was once again most agreeably surprised by a visit from Leona's messenger.

And the moment the young baseball captain saw the lad he suspected he was about to receive important news.

But no conception of what was coming entered his mind just then.

"Yere's another letter," said the boy, coming up to Bob as he stood in the gloaming at the campus gate.

"Thank you."

Bob took the letter and readily mastered its contents. The message was from Leona, of course.

Bob clapped his hand and fairly danced for joy when he had read the note from the beautiful girl of the lone cabin.

One might have thought, justly enough, he had taken leave of his senses when the next moment he rushed away at headlong speed toward the academy library.

On the way he met tall Sam Heaton.

"I've found it at last!" he cried.

"Found what?" asked Sam.

"The book. Leona—the girl I told you about—heard the Frenchman talking with her father. He mentioned the name of the book upon which the secret cipher I have so vainly sought to read is founded."

"Bravo!"

"So say I. Come along. I'm going to the library to get the book now."

A few moments and Bob had secured the volume he wanted and carried it to his room.

There the two lads employed it to read the cipher.

First they turned to the page whose number corresponded to the first figures of the cipher inclosed in brackets.

After that—following the direction of the little guide book for cipher reading—they found it an easy task to master the series of figures and dots which had so long baffled Bob.

And when the cipher was read Bob's joy increased tenfold. The cryptogram revealed the great secret of the robbery of the bank of Bob's grandfather, of which the lad's own father had been accused.

The cipher had been written by the dead man who gave it to Bob. He had been a "pal" of the man who robbed the bank. That man, as the cipher gave conclusive evidence to prove, was Sam Kennard's father.

"So my poor, unfortunate father is innocent. He was unjustly disinherited, and he should have shared the fortune that his rascally brother stole from the bank. In the natural order of things I should ultimately have inherited from my father. So, by right, I should have half the fortune Dan's father holds, and mean to make him disgorge. I can see now that, because he feared me, and thought I might discover the secret of his guilt, he wanted to get me out of the way," said Bob.

That same day Bob received a call from Mr. Baker—the man whose life he had saved at the lone cabin, and who had subsequently secured the release of the lad from the custody of the officer who had arrested him by mistake.

"I have come to keep my promise," said Baker. "You know when last we met I told you—under the pledge of secrecy—that we suspected that the lone cabin was the rendezvous of men concerned in recent robberies that have taken place hereabout. And I promised you that, if the positive proof was found, we should arrest Gardelli and his associates. At your earnest request I agreed that the young girl should not be taken into custody, and that I would promptly inform you when we closed in on the gang. Well, we have done so. The attempt of robbing Professor Walsingham's residence caused the burglars to flee to Kempton, taking Leona with them. There we arrested all but the girl. She came to the village with me, and I have found a home for her in a respectable family. Gardelli was shot while resenting arrest, and he is dead. Before he died he confessed that Leona was not his child, but only an adopted daughter, whose real parents were dead and whom he knew to have no living relations."

"The Frenchman was seriously wounded before he surrendered, and he is in the prison hospital at Kempton. The surgeons say the chances are against his recovery."

All this was great news for Bob, and half an hour later he was in the presence of Leona at her new home.

The young couple enjoyed a long and delightful interview, and when they parted both were happy in the realization of their first youthful dream of love.

Bob had told the maiden the sweet secret that is to young hearts ever new, and she had acknowledged that he was all the world to her.

She explained that when the man Bob saved at the lone cabin first came there, she thought he was one who had long previously saved her life in the river. That was what she meant when she said at that time:

"Can it be he?"

Leona also said that, from conversation she had overheard, she knew that the Frenchman was a professional assassin, whom Dan Kennard's father had engaged to secretly put Bob out of the way.

Dan himself had been leagued with the robbers, whom he had loaned money to and helped in various ways. Leona's supposed father had ordered her to accept Dan's suit on pain of terrible punishment if she did not do so. It was fear of her supposed father that made her accept Dan's escort that day at the ball game.

Bob felt that all the mystery was cleared up now, and the only thing he yet had to worry him was the result of the last game for the championship.

The great day came. In the presence of a vast multitude the rival baseball clubs came to the diamond.

"Play ball!" shouted the umpire.

Then the game opened.

The game proceeded. Five innings were played and Bert Cliff had not made a single misplay.

The score stood Columbia—Columbia 1, Berkley 2.

In the next inning the Berkleys failed to score, and Columbia gained two runs.

In the seventh inning Bert Cliff made a home run and brought in the only score for Columbia.

Again Berkley failed to score.

"By all that's bad, Bert Cliff has betrayed me!" said Dan Kennard, savagely. "I'll have his life for this."

It was so. When Bob walked into Cliff's room, as related, he told Cliff he knew all about his treachery, and that he would have him blacklisted in every baseball club in the country, expelled from the academy, and would himself soundly thrash him unless he swore to play in favor of Columbia in the last game as if he was playing for his very life. Also that he must make Dan Kennard think he was still true to him.

Bert Cliff assented. Bob had completely terrified him.

For once the traitor was true to his word.

He did play a great game. So did Bob, and in fact all the champions. The result was that Columbia won the game and the pennant by three runs.

Some days later Bob learned that the Frenchman had died in the hospital. But he left a written confession which proved that Dan Kennard's father had hired him to kill Boz.

Some time later, armed with that paper and the translated cipher, which proved his rascally uncle had committed the bank robbery, Bob frightened the villain into surrendering

half the inheritance which should have fallen to the young ball player's father.

Dan Kennard would have been arrested as an accomplice of the burglars, but he fled the country the very night of the last ball game.

Some years later, when Bob was a prosperous young lawyer, and Leona was a highly respected and rising music teacher in the Academy town, the young couple became man and wife.

All the old Champions were present at the wedding.

Among them was Tom Beverly, the invalid boy of years before. But now he was as well as any one, and the first to wish Bob and his happy bride "much joy."

THE END.

Read "THE BOY CATTLE KING; OR FRANK FORDHAM'S WILD WEST RANCH," by An Old Scout, which will be the next number ( 268 ) of "Pluck and Luck."

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